

Evolving Female Participation in Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood

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Abstract

This research effort will analyze the level of female political participation within the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) before and after the January 25 revolution, and whether it has changed with the transformation of Egypt's political climate, governing system and ruling elite. An assessment of the level of female participation within the MB and its political party will occur to determine which significant factors - such as governing regime, cultural influences, security issues - have attributed to the magnitude and level of the Muslim Sisters' political exposure and electoral activities. More specifically, this research aims to ascertain if the Muslim Sisters experience their full rights as citizens under the leadership of the MB, and whether the MB's willingness to nominate women is a step towards achieving equality or 'complementarity' within its ranks, or the process of fielding female candidates is nothing more than a "democratic façade." Or is the issue more deeply rooted within the Egyptian, and predominantly Muslim, state and society, and its social norms and existing political structures? The historical context of post-colonial politics and the crisis of authoritarian secular politics will be reviewed as well, as it has contributed to the phenomenon of reinventing the rigid influence of tradition and religion.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	2
Abbreviations.....	5
INTRODUCTION	6
The Aim of This Research	6
The Gender Debate in an Islamist Framework.....	11
Brief History of the MB's Electoral Activities	13
Outline of Chapters	16
CHAPTER ONE	
Theoretical Background.....	19
The Boundaries of the Terms 'Feminism' and 'Islamic'	20
The Evolution of the Term 'Feminism' in Egypt	32
The Appeal of Islamic Feminism	43
Islamic Feminism and Egypt: Its Relation with the State and the MB.....	47
The Muslim Sisters: Islamic Feminists or Plain Islamists?.....	59
Al-Ghazali: Islamic Feminist or Islamist?	64
CHAPTER TWO	
Methodology.....	71
The Components of the Triangulation Method.....	73
Questions Asked During Interviews	80
Ethical Obligation	83
Challenges Faced: Bias and Limitations.....	84
The Interviewer's Advantages	85
CHAPTER THREE	
Historical Background	88
The Birth of Female Empowerment in Egypt	92
Several Women – Different Voices.....	100
The Muslim Brotherhood: The Oldest Islamist Movement	103
Point of Convergence: Zaynab al-Ghazali	123
PART I - THE NON-ELECTORAL MOBILIZATION OF THE MUSLIM SISTERS.....	138
CHAPTER FOUR	
The Muslim Sisters Division and their Non-electoral Participation in Egypt's Politics and Society	139
Al-Banna and the Muslim Sisters.....	139
The Extensive Arrests of MB Members and the Underground Mobilization of the Muslim Sisters.....	141
The Result of Sadat's Forgiving Reign: The Flourishing of the MB and its Activities	144
CHAPTER FIVE	
The Muslim Sisters and the 18-Day Revolution	156
The Beginnings of a People's Protest: The January 25 Revolution.....	157
The Presence and Numbers of the MB.....	158
The Muslim Sisters in Tahrir Square	164
PART II – The Electoral Activities and Participation of the Muslim Sisters as Part of the MB and FJP.....	172

CHAPTER SIX

The Muslim Sisters' Political and Social Activities

Prior to Elections	173
The 1994 MB Document	175
Campaigning Activities and Methods.....	178
A New Era, a New Party - 2011/2012 Elections.....	191
The FJP and the Muslim Sisters.....	203
Regime's Actions of Deterrence	210

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Muslim Sisters' Electoral Activities During Elections	222
The 2000 Elections- Jihan el-Halafawy	222
The 2005 Elections - Makarim el-Deiry.....	225
The 2010 Elections - The NDP Wins 83 Percent of Seats	228
The 2011/2012 The Legislative Assembly/<i>Shura</i> Council Elections	238

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Muslim Sisters Post-Elections.....	244
The FJP Female Cadres and the FJP's National Nahda Project.....	259
The Muslim Sisters and the Press	262
The Constituent Assembly	269
The New Egypt: Inhospitable for Women Activists and Public Personalities?	286

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS..... **300** |

Where do the Muslim Sisters Stand in Respect to Islamic Feminism?	309
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Closing Statements	314
---------------------------------	------------

APPENDICES **318** |

Appendix A: The Muslim Brotherhood's Hierarchical Structure	319
--	------------

Appendix B: Sample of Questions Asked During Interviews	320
--	------------

Appendix C: The Number of Female Parliamentarians from 1976 - 2005	322
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Appendix D: The Muslim Sisters' Organizational Chart	323
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Appendix E: The 2011 People's Assembly Elections Results	324
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Appendix F: The 2012 Shura Council Elections Results	325
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BIBLIOGRAPHY **326** |

Abbreviations

AEFL	Association for Egyptian Female Lawyers
ASU	Arab Socialist Union
CA	Constituent Assembly
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRC	Committee on the Rights of the Child
EFU	Egyptian Feminist Union
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FJP	Freedom and Justice Party
MARAM	Egyptian Center for Monitoring Women's Priorities
MB	Muslim Brotherhood
MLA	Muslim Ladies Association
MP	Member of Parliament
NCW	National Council for Women
NDP	National Democratic Party
NGOs	Non-governmental Organizations
PA	People's Assembly
SC	Security Council
SCAF	Supreme Council for the Armed Forces
SCC	Supreme Constitutional Court
UN	United Nations

INTRODUCTION

In the context of Egypt's history of Islamist influence and an authoritarian regime known for its human rights violations, gender issues have often been used as both scapegoat and marketing ploy to win over the Western community. This was done to ease some of the persisting concerns relating to women's rights in a predominantly patriarchal and culture-driven society. The Muslim Sisters have faced similar obstacles to gaining their rights within the stronghold of the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Aim of This Research

This research investigates whether the female members of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood (MB)¹ are presented with equal opportunities as the MB's male members and are granted their full rights as citizens, irrespective of the organization's personal agenda as an Islamist movement or its political outlooks on equal rights, versus their views on complementarity. More importantly, this research effort sets out to assess how the Muslim Sisters define and understand that concept of women's empowerment and the attainment of their rights as Muslim women within an Islamist movement, and in Egypt's traditional and largely patriarchal society and state. Also, this research effort analyzes whether the Muslim Sisters themselves are invested in achieving greater representation within the MB and its political party.

¹ This research will focus on the original and the oldest MB organization due to the fact that it has had decades of political exposure and experience with an oppressive and corrupt government. Operating as a banned organization, the MB has engaged with the powerful governments of Mubarak and has recruited its female cadres to become politically active since the 2000 elections.

Research will also discuss and analyze the Muslim Sisters' descriptive vs. substantive representation within Egypt's society in large and in Parliament. With the majority presence of the MB and Islamist parties in Egypt's current Parliament, this research effort will assess whether or not the MB will curtail vital human rights in the long run, especially those pertaining to the Coptic and female population in Egypt.

Investigating women's participation in politics within the fold of the MB is not a new practice. The appearance of Ms. Jihan el-Halafawy, as a MB candidate in 2000 for al-Raml district in Alexandria, piqued interest in the MB's doctrine and views on a woman's role in a political context and within an Islamist framework. However, female participation within the MB did not extend beyond having women run as electoral candidates as a result of the government's reaction to el-Halafawy's win; which declared that her win was illegal 'based on procedural grounds'.² Many ideas surfaced as to why the MB decided to temporarily abandon their strategy of nominating women to run for elections soon after, and why the government put a stop to such an activity. The most prominent reasons were that the government wanted to discourage the MB from appearing as a just and democratic organization that was in full support of active female participation and women's rights; and the MB claimed that a higher profile for women in elections under the MB's direction was dangerous - as it would bring about the

² Mona El Ghobashy, "The Metamorphosis of The Egyptian Muslim Brothers," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 37 (2005): 373, accessed November 25, 2010, DOI: 10.1017.S0020743805373041

wrath of the regime.³ Such ideas and allegations will be further explored in the analysis portion of this thesis. At the same time, the women of the MB and their activities and initiatives will be explored, as many of the Muslim Sisters have called for full integration of the female members into the heart of the organization and its movement.⁴

In addition to the questions of emancipation and equal representation of women within the MB, the dissertation will shed light on the extent that the Muslim Sisters are calling for better representation, and whether they are challenging the upper echelons of the MB's organizational structure. There exists in Egypt's society a small yet sure movement of women found within and outside the organization - the Muslim Sisters - that aim to gain political representation in Egypt's Parliament. These women have been identified as MB members, MB loyalists, MB sympathizers and Islamic feminists. With the dissolution of the Mubarak regime, the MB members - both women and men - have been free to come out of the shadows and identify themselves as members of the oldest Islamist organization in the Middle East. Only women who are actively engaged in the political scene in Egypt, driven by their Islamist conviction and ideologies, will be presented in this research. This focus will further reveal the intricate and complex relationship of the state, the MB and gender representation within society and state.

³ The political crackdown of the Mubarak regime was mentioned during the author's interviews with a senior MB male member, and an active female member who ran during the 2010 and 2011 parliamentary elections. O.B. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 17, 2012, and M.A.H. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 17, 2012.

⁴ Omayma Abdel-Latif, and Marina Ottaway, "Women in Islamist Movements: Toward an Islamist Model of Women's Activism," *Carnegie Papers, Carnegie Middle East Center*, no. 2 (June 2007): 11.

This research is vital in understanding the future of female politicians in Egypt and its state policies regarding female political representation in Parliament and beyond, as it tackles several important issues that are currently the source of debate in both the academic circles and within international human rights contexts. More specifically, the outcome of this research will provide a better understanding of the future of female participation in a growing Islamist political setting and government; a form of governing that has been long perceived as anti-human rights and that has been growing in influence in Egypt post January 25, 2011. Most research efforts that have tackled the complexities of Islamist political and feminist issues have done so with a focus on issues of a social and cultural nature.⁵ Granted, in most Middle Eastern societies, social and cultural frameworks hold great influence and importance for the livelihood of women in predominantly patriarchal cultures. Nonetheless, there is a lack of investigation of and focus on low female parliamentary representation and how its relationship with authoritarianism and Islamism is empowering or hindering women's success in Parliament or even on the presidential rung of the political ladder. Such a focus is vital for better understanding the tools of democratic rule and government, and how they could empower or hinder women's rights in a traditionalist and Islamic-oriented society, with the demise of an authoritarian rule

⁵ For an example of the works published regarding women's social and cultural issues within an Islamic context e.g. the veil, divorce, female genital mutilation, and polygamy, refer to Kandiyoti (1991), Mahmood, (2005), Zuhur, *Revealing Reveiling* (1992).

that held only symbolic elections for the purpose of legitimizing its autocratic ruler and respective cronies.⁶

The seemingly uncontrollable wave of Islamization that has swept through the Middle East, especially in Egypt, has carried a major return to Islamic practices; such as the veil that was once discarded in a display of feminist power and female liberation in Egypt. A focus on the MB organization in Egypt is pertinent during the current political period, as the MB has risen to the higher echelons of the Egyptian government and with the election of a senior MB member as Egypt's president in the post-January 25, 2011 era. Assessing the future of Egyptian women and Egypt as a whole - in light of rising Islamist factions and powers - is a prerequisite to any in-depth analysis of the Middle Eastern region during the Arab Spring, and is pivotal to an analysis of the region's power struggle and its stance in regards to international politics and foreign policies.

Despite the fact that the Arab Spring was launched by the Tunisian Jasmine revolution and the self-immolation of a street vendor in protest of the injustices of a corrupt government; the Arab Spring was pushed into full force with Egypt's 18-day revolution, when many countries within the region followed suit in protesting against their longstanding corrupt governments. Egypt is the largest Arab country in population, amassing a greater presence and political weight amongst its neighbours; especially due to its pivotal role in the 1978 Camp David treaty, and in maintaining a semblance of peace or truce between Israel

⁶ Refer to the concept of 'Electoral Authoritarianism' in Andreas Schedler, ed. *Electoral Authoritarianism: The Dynamics of Unfree Competition* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006).

and the Arab world. The overthrow of Mubarak's authoritarian regime has revealed a new playing field and a new set of rules. With the absence of the all-seeing and stifling Mubarak government, how will the Islamist factions respond to the newfound possibilities that are presented to them, albeit under the watchful eyes of the Supreme Council for the Armed Forces (SCAF)⁷ and the rest of the world? They have become free to establish their own political party and to compete in free and fair elections. Currently, the MB represents the majority faction in both the upper and lower houses of Parliament and - with the election of MB member Dr. Mohammed Morsy as Egypt's president post-revolution - in the Presidential office. How will a political setting free from regime crackdowns and arrests, factor into their agenda for minority rights, especially women's rights? Will the Muslim Sisters be emancipated from their customary secondary roles within the MB? Will the newfound political freedom drive them to contest for different political roles in the MB and the new government? Or will they curb their ambitions for political equality in favour of supporting the MB and its political party, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP)?⁸

The Gender Debate in an Islamist Framework

Egypt has witnessed over a century of ground breaking feminist movements starting with the pre-revolution women's suffrage movement, up to present day women-led activism within the realm of political Islam. The women's

⁷ SCAF is the governing unit of the Egyptian military, and is made up of the military's senior officers. It is also the de-facto ruling authority in Egypt.

⁸ The MB's political party - the Freedom and Justice Party - was formed in 2011, within months of the 18-day uprising and the dissolution of Mubarak's government.

movement in the Middle East, particularly in Egypt, has gone through a myriad of societal and political changes that gave rise to new terms such as secular feminism, Muslim feminism, Islamic feminism and gender activism⁹ - all within a Middle Eastern context. Feminism¹⁰ and its ideologies are widely known and are applied outside of the Middle East, but as Moghadam explains - the feminist movements that the region has witnessed are true to the Middle Eastern identity, and are, in many ways, entirely different from the feminist movements that the Western world has observed.¹¹ But why is there a need to focus on the Egyptian women's movement in the 21st century? As the world has experienced dispersion of ideas, thoughts, beliefs, educational opportunities and modern trends through the effects of globalization and the Internet, more women have found their voice and have taken it upon themselves to publicize their political views and stances. Increasingly, Muslim women are using the Internet to write personal accounts (via blogs) of their experiences in different countries in the Middle East. Such accounts have attracted considerable attention in the West and have affected the way in which these women are perceived.¹² In particular, rather than being

⁹ Refer to the works of Karam (1998) Badran (1995) Shehadeh (2003) Baron (2005) Roded (2008), Moghadam (2003) Zuhur (2001) Hafez (2011).

¹⁰ Within the Western context, most gender-related political activism is referred to as feminist movements or gender activism, whereas the application of feminism within the Middle East context separates its ideologies into two distinct entities: secular feminism and Islamic feminism, in light of the dominant influence of religion in the daily lives of Middle Eastern women and men. Refer to Margot Badran, "Between Secular and Islamic Feminisms," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 1, no. 1 (Winter 2005): 6-28, accessed November 24, 2010, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40326847>

¹¹ Moghadam explains that feminism is a theoretical perspective that thrives based on the setting, time, location and history. See Valentine M. Moghadam, "Islamic Feminism and Its Discontents: Toward a Resolution of the Debate," *Signs* 27, no.4 (Summer 2002): 1165, accessed November 25, 2010, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3175948>

¹² Many articles and interviews have taken place during 2011, revealing the testaments of several female bloggers in the midst of the 18 days of the revolution and the months of uncertainty that followed. Refer to Hania Sholkamy, "Why Women are at the Heart of Egypt's Political Trials and

oppressed within a patriarchal structure, Muslim women have been voicing their political views.

Brief History of the MB's Electoral Activities

Since the MB took the decision in the 1980s to participate in parliamentary elections and push forward its agenda, it has been successful in winning a considerable number of seats. Its popularity and influence in the political arena have been exceptionally impressive since, as an autonomous entity, it is banned as a political party in accordance with Law no. 40 (1977) which states that a political party cannot be formed on the basis of a social class, sect, geographic region, race or religion.¹³ To circumvent this law, they have had to ally and work closely with other legitimate and formal political parties, such as the Wafd Party,¹⁴ in their continuous struggle against the ruling authoritarian regime. Through forming alliances with other parties, due to their status as a banned political movement since 1954, the MB managed to win a considerable number of seats as a result of their presence at the grassroots level, as well as the active membership of many of the Brothers in Egypt's professional syndicates. As the MB's political clout began to grow and influence Egypt's population throughout

Tribulations," *50/50 inclusive democracy*, January 24, 2012, accessed January 30, 2012, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/hania-sholkamy/why-women-are-at-heart-of-egypt%E2%80%99s-political-trials-and-tribulations>.

¹³ Law no. 40 of the Egyptian Constitution, Legislative Assembly, 1977.

¹⁴ The Wafd Party is the oldest liberal party in Egypt. It became a major party when Egypt attained independence in 1922, and was very active in the 1920s and 1930s as a major nationalist force under the leadership of Saad Zaghlul. At the time, it was viewed as the only legitimate threat to the Muslim Brotherhood's power and influence. It reemerged as the New Wafd Party - a nationalist, liberal party - in 1983.

the 1990s, the regime became more aware of the MB's threat to their stability and longevity in Egypt's political game.

For the past decade, the MB and its top officials have called for more democratic articles in Egypt's national policies, voicing the same concerns as their counterparts and human rights organizations. In addition, the MB has been a strong advocate of female participation in the political realm thoroughly supporting female members of the MB in running for elections at the local, district and national levels. During the 2000 and 2005 elections, for instance, several female MB members took part in many of the MB campaigns, ranging from heading demonstrations to electoral campaigning, thereby dispelling some of the pre-conceived notions of Islam as an oppressive tool used against women.¹⁵

However, the intention behind the MB's support of the Muslim Sisters is questionable. A review of the history of the MB's political activities demonstrates how they constantly shaped and adapted its vision according to the surrounding political climate. In particular, the MB successfully adapted to the regime's tactics of capitalizing on its 'Islamizing' social presence and growing influence to make the government's 'democratic' agendas and plans appear more appealing to the masses. This led the regime to give more political freedom to the MB to counteract the secular parties with a more democratic vision since a popular secular party could threaten the regime's NDP and its success.¹⁶ This

¹⁵ Matt Bradley. "Muslim Brotherhood Reaches out to the Sisterhood," *The National*, April 13, 2010, accessed April 13, 2010, <http://www.thenational.ae/news/worldwide/africa/muslim-brotherhood-reaches-out-to-the-sisterhood>

¹⁶ Khairi Abaza, "Political Islam and Regime Survival in Egypt," *Policy Focus, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, no. 51 (2006): 18, accessed November 10, 2011, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/html/pdf/PolicyFocus51.pdf>

'evolutionary' trait is also evident through the MB's history of electoral activities from the 1980s to the present day. However, the old regimes of Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak, consistently use religion as a tool to achieve their political ends, by reassuring the Muslim majority in Egypt that the government relies on the laws of Islam to oversee its executive decisions.¹⁷ This research will examine whether this 'evolutionary' and accommodating trait extends to the Muslim Sisters when presented with the choice of either asserting themselves within the MB and society, or accommodating the MB organization's needs and priorities over their own.

With a minority presence in Egypt's Parliament and state, the MB will be required to answer to the Muslim Sisters' demands, and listen to their grievances of not being fully integrated into the MB as equal members. The Muslim Sisters may not view themselves as Islamic feminists but they are women who are repeatedly asking for their equal status and the rights that have been given to them by Islam and Islamic jurisprudence. However, these demands of women's empowerment and rights may not necessarily mean well for the overall feminist discourse and the enacting of constitutional laws that would safeguard women's rights and liberties. An analysis of the Muslim Sisters' participation in the 2012 Constituent Assembly will clarify their position – as either beneficial to some, or detrimental to all. For example, the descriptive and/or substantive representation of the Sisters may prove beneficial to women belonging to an Islamist camp and detrimental to women who identify themselves as secular, and to women who

¹⁷ Robert Lee, *Religion and Politics in the Middle East* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2010): 281-283 and Scott Hibbard, *Religious Politics and Secular States: Egypt India and the United States* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2010): 62-63.

see themselves as part of the Muslim community, but prefer to support non-Islamist political affiliations.

Outline of Chapters

The point of this research is to analyze the stance of the Muslim Sisters within the MB and within the Egyptian society by looking at their political participation in Egypt's elections. The political ratings of the MB within the Egyptian Parliament will further help in assessing the progress (or lack thereof) of women's empowerment within such an organization. The MB had always claimed to have ambitious plans for the Muslim Sisters and women's participation in elections and in the MB organization. However, why hasn't there been a significant increase in female political participation within the MB? Is there a lack of sincerity on the part of the MB officials in their desire for a larger politically proactive female division within the party; thereby discouraging the Muslim Sisters from pressing on with demands for better representation? This is not to say that the number of women who adopt political roles within the MB, while staying true to their Islamic beliefs, has not increased over the past decade. On the contrary, more women are taking a stand to defend their rights under the banner of Islam. These women defend their religion and faith against arguments claiming that Islam is completely incompatible with the concept of human rights and gender activism.¹⁸ The question here is: why hasn't the number of politically

¹⁸ Dr Heba Abdel Roauf and Dr. Safinaz Kazim are prominent Islamist academics that continually address the misconceptions about Islam and its treatment of women and their political rights within an Islamic and secular society and government.

active and influential female members of the MB increased dramatically as one would expect after the growing influence of Islamic political thought and the MB's public support towards its female members?

Chapter One - Historical Background, will assess the women's movement within the MB and Egyptian society by analyzing previous literature and scholarship that have targeted the three main variables - women, the MB and Egypt. An Islamic feminist perspective will be applied that would best describe the relationship of these three subject matters in light of this research's focus on the Muslim Sisters, in addition to a discussion of the Sisters' descriptive vs. substantive representation within Egypt's government and parliament. Chapter Two - Methodology, will then discuss the methodology applied to compile and analyze the present qualitative data, as well as the information that was gathered through field research. Possible obstacles and impediments to the ideal and successful completion of field research will be posed and discussed. Questions posed during interviews as part of the field research effort, are presented as well. Chapter Three - Historical Background, presents a highlight of the history of feminist movements - Islamist and secular - in Egypt, as well as history of the creation and growth of the oldest Islamist organization: Egypt's MB. Additionally, Chapters One and Three include a theoretical and historical examination of the complex relationship between the feminist movements and authoritarian regimes. Next, the analysis portion of the thesis will be divided into two parts. Part I assesses the Muslim Sisters' non-electoral activities as part of the MB, and Part II examines their electoral participation and efforts before, during and after

election season. Both parts will investigate the Sisters' actions by analyzing the years after the formation of the MB to the 2012 parliamentary elections. Specifically, Part II will examine and assess the outcomes of the 2011/2012 parliamentary elections and the Muslim Sisters' role in the Constituent Assembly in rewriting Egypt's new constitution. The Sister's activities within the MB's political party - the FJP - will be documented as well. The concluding chapter will present the assessments reached in light of this research, and will determine whether the thesis statements are supported, disproved or require further investigation.

CHAPTER ONE

Theoretical Background

This research questions the extent to which the Muslim Sisters themselves seek representation within the largely patriarchal-hierarchy that is the MB. Moreover, it sheds light on a more defined reason or catalyst for the rise in female political participation under the banner of the MB in parliamentary elections in particular, and in election activities as a whole. Research also queries as to whether the Muslim Sisters have been affected by the growing popularity of the phenomena commonly known as 'Islamic Feminism' - an ideology that seeks to ensure women's rights within an Islamic framework - or whether they desire to remain unchanged in regards to their position and level of influence in the MB on an organizational level, and inevitably, on a state level. To that end, and for a better understanding of the ideology and framework in which the Muslim Sisters mobilize, this research provides an assessment of 'Islamic feminism' and the growth of the feminist movement in Egypt.

Such an assessment, of women's rights and a woman's place in general, is pertinent now more than ever, in the shadow of the growing Islamist presence in Egypt. The political stance of the Muslim Sisters is increasingly relevant in regards to the national policies put forth by the new government, which is moving forward down the path of Islamization and gradually eradicating secular influences. More importantly, the reaction and stance of the Muslim Sisters within the MB, and the FJP's view of foreign policy and the intervention of powerful states and international organizations in relation to women's issues, will be pivotal in determining the direction of women's rights and stance within Egyptian

society, and under the new constitution. The results of this academic effort may help map out the future of women's rights and women empowerment within Egypt and other Arab countries where powerful Islamist parties and organizations exist. An understanding of the context in which we see growing participation of the Muslim Sisters could reveal the extent to which the president's social and political agenda prioritize women's right in particular and human rights in general. Inversely, the decreasing political participation of the Muslim Sisters might indicate that a rising Islamic rhetoric and a narrower Islamic interpretation will undermine already existing rights of women. Understanding the reasons behind and motives for the rising political participation of the Muslim Sisters, will reveal if women's right in particular and human rights in general are a priority in the new president's political and social agenda. It will also shed light on the question of whether rising Islamic rhetoric and a narrower Islamic interpretation will undermine the rights that women have gained over the past few decades. In this way, analyzing the activities of the Muslim Sisters will serve as a barometer of the future climate.

The Boundaries of the Terms 'Feminism' and 'Islamic'

In order to better grasp the evolving ideology of 'Islamic feminism', a dissection of the term 'feminism' and the term 'Islamic' is needed to provide a clearer picture of the controversial idea of Islamic feminism. A complete breakdown of both terms and an overview of their common misconceptions and the normative beliefs surrounding them are required for the outlined task.

Feminism

The term 'feminism' has always been viewed as a Western invention. It was introduced in France in the 1880s, where Hubertine Auclert coined the term in her political writings as she critically weighed the apparent male dominance in defining women's rights that were within women's reach after the French revolution.¹⁹ Feminism as an idea and movement is rooted in the belief that women are full citizens of their respective societies and nations, and the demand for equal rights by their governments and peers should serve as the movement's primary goal. As Badran puts it: "At its most basic, or generic, feminism is a critique of women's subordination and a challenge to male domination and includes efforts to rectify women's situation."²⁰ In regards to the topic at hand (i.e. Islamic feminism), what differentiates liberal feminism from Islamic feminism, is that liberal feminism emphasizes the 'individual' and individual autonomy with the desire to occupy positions in society and government that have been previously exclusively for men. Whereas Islamic feminism focuses on the Islamic society that is characterized by an Islamic framework as a whole to achieve women's rights, and does not concern itself with the issue of women attaining powerful positions in the state that are only reserved for men.²¹ Still, both strains of feminism see legislative reform as the main tool that would enable women to become equal contributors to the betterment of their society. However, the

¹⁹ Carolyn, J. Eichner, "La Citoyenne in the World: Hubertine Auclert and Feminist Imperialism," *French Historical Studies* 32, no. 1 (2009): 63-84. doi: 10.1215/00161071-2008-013

²⁰ Margot Badran, *Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergences*, (Oxford: One World Publications, 2009), 329.

²¹ Huma Ahmed-Ghosh, "Dilemmas of Islamic and Secular Feminists and Feminisms," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 9, no.3 (May 2008), 111.

versatility of feminism, as a concept and ideology, has made it possible to be redefined and grow in different soils across the world. History has witnessed various types of feminisms that can be defined by their political leanings such as: liberal feminists, right-wing feminists, conservative feminists, socialist feminists, utopian feminists, equity feminists, Nazi feminists, imperial feminists and national feminists.²² Alternatively, a group of feminists may be demographically grouped such as Turkish feminists and Egyptian feminists. One of the most vital identities that have united women and women rights activists in the fight for equality throughout history has been religion; such as the congregation of Jewish feminists, Catholic feminists and Islamic feminists for the purpose of achieving women's rights within the spectrum of their religious beliefs. Christian and Jewish feminists, like Islamic feminists, - who while examining and rethinking their own traditions - could not tolerate the idea of not working to change and rethink their traditions and culture, in favor of adopting the cultures of their new and changing surroundings. For example, Islamic feminist Leila Ahmed describes herself as a 'self-critical American feminist' who is occupied with "examining and rethinking Muslim norms and values so that they might be more accommodating to women."²³

Feminist theory rejects the over-simplistic explanations of sex and the notion of sexuality, as it does not accept that what primarily defines a women is

²² Moghadam, "Islamic Feminism and Its Discontents," 1154.

²³ Miriam Cooke, *Women Claim Islam: Creating Islamic Feminism through Literature* (London: Routledge, 2001), 292.

only her physiology.²⁴ The use of the term gender has enabled theorists to comprehend several elements other than the physical, in defining a woman or the homogeneous grouping of women. Through the integration of cultural, historical and social positioning, feminist theorists have added elements to more effectively create the social construct of women without relying solely on their physical attributes. Activities of positioning are evident in the study of gender where the place, timeline, and language are taken into consideration and which inevitably gave rise to the issue of gender performativity. In regards to the topic at hand, Cooke describes Islamic feminism as “not a coherent identity, but rather a contingent, contextually determined strategic self-positioning.”²⁵

To better understand the rhetoric of gender regarding a certain case study, one must acknowledge the already present social construct of the male and female subjects, and how it facilitates one’s ‘performance’, affirming Butler’s theory that whatever construct gender appears in; it is more often than not, influenced by the society that is being researched, where people acquire - and are not born into - such societal positioning.²⁶ In the case of Islamic feminism in the Middle East, it has been maintained that discrimination against women was more rooted in social norms and was not derived from religious texts and laws.²⁷ This, in turn, revealed endless possibilities for women activists to work with in the face of discriminatory elements found in the Middle East, such as authoritarian

²⁴ Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory.” *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 520-521, accessed June 28, 2012, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3207893>

²⁵ Cooke (2001), 59.

²⁶ Butler, 523.

²⁷ Moghadam, “Islamic Feminism and its Discontents,” 1144.

regimes and the influence of traditional and patriarchal Islamic *ulama*' (legal scholars). It can be argued that authoritarianism and patriarchal practices are rarely exclusive from one another. It could also be said that Islamic feminism distorts the spectrums that have long been constructed when discussing the polarities 'religious' and 'secular' and 'East' and 'West'.²⁸

The relevant questions here, in regards to this research on the Muslim Sisters, are as follows: Is feminism a Western concept? Is it only viable and applicable in Western contexts? Can it grow on foreign soil? Moreover, are those, who promote women equality and advancement automatically, feminists? Furthermore, Moghadam puts forth an important question: Can creating a "more inclusive 'global feminism'"²⁹ minimize the differences and misunderstandings between Western and Eastern feminist analysts?

Of the many misconceptions of the ideology of feminism is the perception that it communicates exclusively via liberal and democratically charged rhetoric and tools; rejecting any reference to women's issues with a conservative element. When assessing feminist texts by Western writers, it comes as a revelation that there exists a pool of thinkers and analysts who work within the conservative construct to ensure that women's rights are pinpointed and actualized. Several academics such as Childs, Celis and Krook³⁰ have challenged the traditional constructs of feminism by assessing and analysing

²⁸ Badran. "Between Secular and Islamic Feminisms," 12-14.

²⁹ Moghadam, "Islamic Feminism and Its Discontents," 1154.

³⁰ Sarah Childs, Karen Celis and Mona Lena Krook have published several works that discuss the concepts of sex, gender and the substantive representation of women in regard to party politics and gender-specific policies in Western governments. It is important to note that the majority of their works solely focus on how female representation (whether descriptive or substantive) affect gender-related policies within government, and not within their political parties or social movements.

conservative women movements within EU governments and pointing out the pitfalls of the ideas of 'false consciousness,'³¹ and presenting relevant arguments of substantive vs. descriptive representation.³² False consciousness is relevant to the current discussion since it highlights how women, affiliated with an Islamist conservative movement, are rejected as a possibility or reality by the Egyptian society, in their pursuit of women's rights and implementation of gender related policies. The Egyptian secular society is highly critical of social political movements that work within a religious framework; perceiving their goals and agendas to only take into account gender issues that are in cohesion with religious texts and practices. However, Western conservative feminists have made major strides in calling on their governments to construct and pass gender-related policies under the direction of their conservative views and agendas. Much like the Muslim Sisters, Webb and Childs' assessment of conservative feminists in Western cultures value women's traditional gender roles in society and reject "feminist arguments that adopt a 'male' model of careerism and public achievement as female goals, thereby denying women's needs for intimacy, family and children."³³ Celis and Childs continue this line of analysis by explaining that, generally, the topic of conservative feminists is tackled using one

³¹ The idea of false consciousness in its most basic form refers to any ideological construct or view that prevents society from grasping the essence or true sense of an event or situation. It was later developed further by Karl Marx to explain how people and societies are moved and mobilized through the construction of exploitive tools that cripple an individual's ability to become aware of the true reality of his/her social and political framework.

³² Substantive representation refers to the representation of women's issues and needs, whereas Descriptive representation makes a distinction between women representing women's issues and male representatives. Many academics contend that commonalities in gendered experiences serve as a better representation for women issues than having male representatives for gender-specific policies. Refer to Dovi, (2002), Mansbridge, (1999) and Phillips (1995).

³³ Paul Webb and Sarah Childs, "Gender Politics and Conservatism: The View from the British Conservative Party Grassroots," *Government and Opposition* 47, no. 1 (2012): 24, doi:10.1111/j.1477-7053.2011.01355.x

of two approaches: assessing feminists against liberal/secular feminist criteria; or by considering breaking down their representation and placing it on a “continuum with ‘nonsubstantive representation of women/anti-feminist/conservative’ at one end, and the ‘substantive representation of women/feminist/leftist’ at the other.”³⁴

In a post-2011 revolution Egypt, the Muslim Sisters - due to their religious, political and social affiliations - are viewed as conservative descriptive representatives of Egypt’s women’s issues and gender-specific politics in a Parliament dominated by men. Female representation in Parliament is a little over two percent; with the Muslim Sisters standing as a majority in that minuscule percentage.³⁵ Expectedly, the initial assessment of the Muslim Sisters’ 2011/2012 political performance in regards to women’s issues is quite bleak, but due to the basic idea of representation, Celis et al. explains that the “represented and their needs are constructed through claims, rather than a reflection of the ‘authentic’ needs and values of society.”³⁶ As this research effort progresses, the MB and FJP’s claims will further define and clarify the Muslim Sisters’ activities and political actions before and during the MB’s political and social reign in Egypt. The Muslim Sisters have been given a large responsibility and burden within Egypt’s society, due to the MB’s resonance in Egypt’s streets and Parliament, and due to their ‘descriptive’ obligation to serve women’s needs in Egypt’s politics. Childs warns against such portrayal of female candidates; where arguing that women are almost always better representatives than men regarding

³⁴ Karen Celis and Sarah Childs, “The Substantive Representation of Women: What to Do with Conservative Claims?” *Political Studies* 60 (2012): 218, DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9248.2011.00904.x

³⁵ Sholkamy.

³⁶ Celis and Childs, 216.

women's issues, leads to both reductive and essentialist conclusion,³⁷ that do not ultimately prove useful in the dissection and analysis of the role of the Muslim Sisters within the MB and Egypt's Parliament and society. Childs highlights a major question that is highly relevant in Egypt's patriarchal society and state: "Do women in politics make a difference?"³⁸ In other words: Does the number of women, present in Parliament, affect the future of women-centric policies; whether they are passed or rejected? Can the thesis statement of this research – are the Muslim Sisters empowered within the MB and Egyptian society – be answered by assessing the percentage of conservative female politicians in the Parliament? Celis et al. argues that descriptive representation of women in Parliament does not necessarily lead to an increased focus on women-centric policies, because this narrow outlook overlooks the fact that not all women hold the same views and political alignment. This outlook, also, completely negates the possibility of men serving as potential political actors interested in advancing an agenda that serves women's rights and policies.³⁹

Egyptian feminists and respective organizations have been largely focused on descriptive representation post-January 25 revolution, due to the fact that the women represented in Parliament are largely from the MB, and that descriptive representation of women should ensure the growth of democracy and a sense of justice in Egypt over the long term, by including women in

³⁷ Sarah Childs, "The Complicated Relationship between Sex, Gender and the Substantive Representation of Women," *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13, no. 7 (2006): 10, accessed August 10, 2013, DOI: 10.1177/1350506806060003

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Karen Celis, Sarah Childs, Johanna Kantola, and Mona Lena Krook, "Rethinking Women's Substantive Representation," *Representation* 44, no.2 (2008): 99, DOI: 10.1080/00344890802079573

policymaking and political decision-making. Descriptive representation also presents Egyptian women with the opportunity to more clearly discern if women's political presence has worked for - or against - feminist demands and to determine whether the practice of applying women's quotas is needed, despite popular arguments that placing such quotas contradict the application and practice of a democratic agenda. Again, these questions push analysts to shift their focus from the question of how descriptive representation in Egypt makes a difference to the question of how substantive representation affects women's empowerment within their society and government. This shift acknowledges the ideological contradictions and difference between the Muslim Sisters and the secular feminists who challenged the Sisters' representation of Egyptian women – as a group – in a traditionalist and patriarchal society and state. As Childs points out, there could be a merging of “the substantive representation of women and the substantive representation of (leftist/liberal/progressive) feminist interests,”⁴⁰ when they are viewed as one and the same. Such logic also concludes that conservative women's priorities are set by their conservative views in regards to women's issues. In order to negate such narrow views of conservative feminists' substantive representation, female conservatives may on occasion; and in a way that may appear to be in contradiction to their party or political affiliation, choose to act on behalf of women in a feminist manner. Such an argument by Childs is comparative of the Muslim Sisters' predicament in that conservative women may fail to defy their political party's wishes, further highlighting why the “relationship between the descriptive and the substantive

⁴⁰ Celis and Childs, 216.

representation of women has proven so contingent in practice.”⁴¹ Current media outlets and feminist movements in Egypt have denied the Muslim Sisters’ conservative claims and actions in regards to safeguarding women’s rights due to the Sisters’ perceived false consciousness or the belief that they are nothing but a ‘wolf in sheep’s clothing.’ This level of distrust in conservative or religious elements have halted major efforts of Egyptian women and men working together to implement policies and laws that would benefit and protect women’s rights and interests.

With the growing Islamization of society and state in the Middle East, feminist movements in Egypt need to let go of limited theories that women or men cannot be substantive representatives in Parliament when they are directed by conservative claims, or do not associate with the term and ideology of feminism. Childs contends that these representatives and their accompanying parties are “likely to come from across the ideological spectrum. This is likely, in turn, to result in diverging, if not conflicting, views about women’s gendered interests.”⁴² As this research will reveal, the Muslim Sisters and the MB have shown a strong aversion to the idea of feminism, and its members reject any definition that would place them within the same spectrum as this ‘Western’ concept. It must be noted that the term ‘Islamic feminism’ is still in formation; it is yet to take on a form of a tangible movement or a political theory. It materialized in the midst of Middle East and Western feminists study of Muslim women, and women who belong to Islamist movements, in an attempt to clarify this

⁴¹ Celis and Childs, 217.

⁴² Ibid., 214.

homogeneous group's interests and motives. Islamic feminism may not necessarily uphold the same idea of equality between the sexes as most feminist movements, in the rest of the world or amongst the secular pockets in the Middle East, do. Currently, there exists a divide between the world of academia and the real world that corresponds to the divide between theory building and the reality of women's rights issues within the confines of Islam. Academics are analyzing the tools used by Muslim women to redefine the dated interpretation of the Quran, whereas theorists and theologians are exhausting their efforts in trying to reach policy-makers and focusing on rectifying the West's perception of women in Islam.

Islamic/Islamist

'Islamic' and 'Islamist' are used interchangeably in the present day, resulting in the collation of both terms and the misconception that both terms can be used to describe anything pertaining to the practice of Islam. 'Islamic' defines anything that pertains to the religion of Islam, especially in regards to practice and thought. 'Islamist' is an adjective; it refers to the growing phenomenon of political Islam. Islamic - rather than Islamist - feminism is used to describe Muslim women who seek women's rights through Islam due to that fact that their primary idea and analytical tool is *'ijtihad* (the independent investigation of religious sources). Not all Muslim women seeking to redefine women's rights through the use of *Quranic* interpretation take on a political discourse, as *'ijtihad*

requires the focus on theological aspects first and foremost;⁴³ thereby negating the option of framing these women as 'Islamist feminists'.

The Islamization of feminism began to take root during the 1970s when the Islamization of the Middle East took place. The growing Islamizing social movement fed the growth of Islamic feminist discourses. Badran explains that initially: "Islamists' rhetoric called for a return of women to a 'purer' and more 'authentic' domestic life away from the public scene."⁴⁴ However, this was soon followed by the recruitment of women and their many skills at accessing the private sphere of society, with the promise of a new day and a new Islamic state.⁴⁵ At the same time, it was the spread of this conservative and patriarchal interpretation of religion that captured the attention and concern of both secular and Muslim women, thereby planting the seeds for the growth of Islamic feminism that would enable women to replace the limited views of Islam with more progressive ones. The growth of Islamic feminism in Egypt came as no surprise since the Islamization of Egyptian society has been evident for decades; much like the growing Islamist influence and the current plethora of Islamic feminist thinkers that was previously witnessed in Iran.

⁴³ Cooke (2001), 62 and Nayereh Tohidi, "Islamic Feminism': Perils and Promises," *The Middle East Women's Studies Review* 13 (Fall 2001): 141-142, accessed March 28, 2011, <http://find.galegroup.com/gtx/infomark.do?&contentSet=IACDocuments&type=retrieve&tabID=T003&prodId=AONE&docId=A95552761&source=gale&srcprod=AONE&userGroupName=wind05901&version=1.0>

⁴⁴ Badran (2009), 9.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

The Evolution of the Term 'Feminism' in Egypt

To better understand the definition and place of Islamic feminism in the spectrum of women-related studies, one must consider the other commonly used identities in the Middle East and Egypt. Feminism as a movement appeared on Egypt's political scene in line with other nationalist movements at the turn of the 20th century during Egypt's resistance of British rule. Badran refers to this feminist movement as the Egyptian feminist movement, so as not to be confused with Western feminism.⁴⁶ Egyptian feminism describes an ideology that mobilized the women of Egypt during nationalist movements and served as a prelude to the rise of Islamic feminism. Islamic feminist's actions and practices have grown out of earlier feminists' causes and struggles whether they were secular, nationalist or even humanitarian.

Egyptian Feminism

Egyptian feminism was founded in a political scene unique to Egypt, where Egyptian women called for equal representation within the nationalist movement that swept the country at that time.⁴⁷ Bearing in mind that the Egyptian women's movement has changed throughout modern Egyptian history, chapter three - historical background, will offer a glimpse of several prominent women credited with the impressive women's movement. This practice of methodological individualism reflected the divergent opinions and beliefs amongst Egyptian women during the past century or so, in relation to women's roles in society, both

⁴⁶ Badran (2009), 2.

⁴⁷ Badran, "Between Secular and Islamic Feminisms," 12.

in the public and private sphere, and the relationship between the individual, the state and religion. Egyptian feminists were those who sought equal representation for women through the use of secular rhetoric; they sought a democratic nation that is separated from religion. In the case of Egypt in the early 20th century, Egyptian feminism was a way to combine the plight of Egyptian women - both Muslim and Coptic - with that of a nationalist secular agenda. Egyptian feminism depended on multiple discourses that also included Islamic, modernist and humanitarian.⁴⁸ The term 'Muslim feminists' was later used by academics such as Karam to describe politically and socially active women in a Muslim-majority country, who tried to achieve their goals by acknowledging and consulting both Islamic and secular principles.⁴⁹ More specifically, Muslim feminists have tried to define their struggle through the use of several nationalistic, cultural and democratic discourses; resorting to the use of Islamic speech on occasion.⁵⁰

What is Islamic Feminism?

The term Islamic feminism is a contentious one. Many have hesitated to use it, others reject it as a concept altogether.⁵¹ It is still an evolving term, it is not set in stone and it has not been completely adopted by academics and activists

⁴⁸ Margot Badran, "Islamic Feminism: What's in a Name?" *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, 17 - 23 January 2002, accessed October 10, 2010, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2002/569/cu1.htm>

⁴⁹ Azza Karam, *Women, Islamisms and the State: Contemporary Feminisms in the Middle East*. (London: Macmillan, 1998), 9.

⁵⁰ Egyptian feminist Hoda Sha'rawi acknowledged that women had rights bestowed on them by Islamic *sharia*, and she fought for those laws to be realised during the first wave of feminism in Egypt. Refer to Ruth Roded, *Women in Islam and the Middle East: A Reader* (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2008), 227.

⁵¹ Haideh Moghissi, *Feminism and Islamic Fundamentalism: The Limits of Postmodern Analysis* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1999), 134.

engaged in gender activism. Ahmed-Ghosh suggested that one could move the focus away from the term feminism for those

“who claim that a rereading of the *Quran* by women is essential to the reinterpreting of women’s status in Islam ...Neither Islamic feminism nor secular feminism is an end in itself; they are processes that are constantly shifting.”⁵²

For the purpose of this research, the term Islamic feminism is used as more of a description and a starting point for the analysis of the Muslim Sisters. It is not a label for a group or an existing movement, it is more of a descriptive identity to better explain what a certain group of gender activists aim to accomplish through the dissolution of secular feminist ideas and the reconstruction of a set of beliefs and actions that may better represent women in predominantly Muslim states within the MENA region. As aforementioned, a divide exists between feminism in the East and its counterpart in the West. Badran asserts the importance of recognizing that

“there is no East/West fault line. We cannot speak of Islamic feminism and the West. Islamic feminism, like Islam today, is in the West as it is in the East. Muslim detractors allege that “the West” has foisted feminism, first secular and now Islamic, upon Muslims to the detriment of Islam and society.”⁵³

Islamic feminism declares the religion of Islam and its scriptures, as the only source from which all gender-related interpretations are derived.⁵⁴ Islamic feminism’s naming and positioning has enabled it to operate on several levels, further highlighting the commonalities between feminists’ agendas and Islamists’ concerns, which occasionally overlap on several noticeable issues such as those

⁵² Ahmed-Ghosh, 111.

⁵³ Margot Badran, “Islamic Feminism Revisited.” *Al- Ahrām Weekly Online*, February 9 – 15, 2006, accessed November 11, 2010, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2006/781/cu4.htm>

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

pertaining to family law. Islamic feminism could be viewed as an ideology that springs from a focus on women's issues and that is defined by its Islamic framework, where Muslim women and Islamist women argue that women's rights may be realized through the implementation of the tools of Islamic *sharia* and jurisprudence.⁵⁵ Some Islamic feminists may go as far as to declare that these 'Islamic' rights will only be attained within the confines of an Islamic state.⁵⁶ However, many Muslim women, who are engaged in 'women-centric' movements and activities, reject the identity of 'feminist' as they are convinced that 'feminism' was borne out of Western concepts, and therefore would never succeed in the traditional and majority-Muslim populations of the Middle East and Asia.⁵⁷ There is no denying that there are no strains of Western influences in the work of Islamic feminists, a fact highly evident in works of Muslim and Islamic feminists in the Islamic Republic of Iran, as they bridge their world with others, to partake in an idea of transnational feminism while remaining true to their Muslim or Islamic identity.⁵⁸ On the other hand, the term 'Islamic', to others, may imply a deeply patriarchal monotheistic religion that is unbending and strict in regards to women and their rights.⁵⁹ Many analysts and feminists view 'Islamic feminism' as more of

⁵⁵ Badran, "Islamic Feminism Revisited," 6.

⁵⁶ Badran, "Islamic Feminism: What's in a Name?"

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Roza Eftekhari, "Zanan: Trials And Successes of a Feminist Magazine in Iran," *The Middle East Women's Studies Review* 13 (Fall 2001): 15-22, accessed March 28, 2011, <http://find.galegroup.com/gtx/infomark.do?&contentSet=IACDocuments&type=retrieve&tabID=T003&prodId=AONE&docId=A95552761&source=gale&srcprod=AONE&userGroupName=wind05901&version=1.0>

⁵⁹ Roxanna Marcotte, "Egyptian Islamists and the Status of Muslim Women Question" *JSRI* 11(Summer 2005), 60-62 and Azza Heikal, "On Islamic feminism," *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, 8 - 14 November 2007, accessed November 25, 2010, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2007/870/op7.htm>

an oxymoron than a growing and evolving theory.⁶⁰ Muslim women are not the only source of antagonism that the term currently faces within the Middle East. Feminist and academic Haideh Moghissi argues that the religion of Islam is completely incompatible with feminism and women's rights altogether, as she believes Islam is "a religion which is based on gender hierarchy [and] the struggle for gender democracy and women's equality with men."⁶¹ Furthermore, due to Islamic feminism's lack of structure and identity, the idea itself is left vulnerable to claims of inauthenticity and harsh theoretical criticism. Moghissi explains that the reason for the term's lack of coherence is that it originated from "diasporic feminist academics and researchers of Muslim background living and working in the West... [that] excludes core ideas of legal and social equity, sexual democracy and women's control over their sexuality,"⁶² and not from Muslim women within the confines of an Islamic and/or patriarchal state. Analysts have also criticized Iran's Islamic feminists for their neglect of other issues pertaining to sexuality and gender such as homosexuality and personal autonomy, in comparison to the strides taken by Western cultures and governments to deal with such concerns.⁶³ At the same time, there is neglect in the assessment of American liberal feminists' failure of not focusing more on economic and political concerns;⁶⁴ which the Muslim Sisters in Egypt have

⁶⁰ Moghissi argues that the belief system in Islam is in direct contradiction to the demands of women's rights. However, her argument is based on the specific case study of Iran where religion represents a legal and political system and where Islamic political rule is incompatible with cultural pluralism. Refer to Haideh Moghissi, "Women, Modernity, and Political Islam." *Iran Bulletin*, 19-20 (Autumn/Winter 1998): 42.

⁶¹ Moghissi (1999), 126.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 146 and Cooke (2001), 57.

⁶³ Moghadam, "Islamic Feminism and Its Discontents," 1159.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

discussed and argued for during their sessions in Parliament, and as members of the MB's political party. This is due to the MB's commitment to implementing a capitalist system in Egypt to fulfil demands for equal opportunities in education and employment.⁶⁵

Secular Feminism vs. Islamic Feminism

The languages used by secular feminists and Islamic feminists, in Egypt and the Middle East as a whole, sometimes differ greatly and places them at the opposing ends of women's activism and their goals for equality.⁶⁶ As mentioned before, the term 'secular' has become associated with Western modernity while anything 'religious' has been viewed by the West as well as Westernized seculars as 'traditional' and 'ancient'. Such connotations have made it difficult for secular feminists and Islamic feminists to make significant or lasting contributions to the well being of Middle Eastern society. Islamic feminists and the MB continue to reject their association with what they perceive as Western feminist philosophy and politics seeking to undermine traditional family structures inevitably leading to the dissolution of hopes of realizing a united Islamic *umma*.⁶⁷ The end result is that Islamic feminists are portrayed as hard-lined Islamists. This research study aims to establish whether the Muslim Sisters fall in the category of Islamists, or whether they are to be viewed as Islamic feminists. Orientalist

⁶⁵ Moghadam, "Islamic Feminism and Its Discontents," 1159 and Fawaz A. Gerges, "The New Capitalists: Islamists' Political Economy," *openDemocracy*, May 10, 2012, accessed November 13, 2012, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/fawaz-gerges/new-capitalists-islamists-political-economy>

⁶⁶ Badran, "Islamic Feminism Revisited."

⁶⁷ Refer to all works of al-Ghazali, Dr. Heba Raouf Ezzat and Safinaz Kazim and Mervat Hatem "Gender and Islamism in the 1990s," *MERIA Journal*, <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer222/gender-islamism-1990s>

views⁶⁸ are still deeply entrenched in Western discourse regarding Islamic and gender studies of the Middle East. The concept of 'Insider' and 'Outsider', 'Self', 'Other selves' or just 'Others' are used in relation to women's movements in the Middle East and Asia.⁶⁹ Naturally, the history surrounding gender relations, women's emancipation and overall gender-related social movements take place against the presence of the 'Other'. The 'Other' in most Middle Eastern societies, who inhabit the 'public' space, subjecting women to the 'private' space of the society, is the male presence. This is where the rise of feelings of antagonism takes place; when one identity cannot fully evolve or reach its potential in the presence of the 'Other'.⁷⁰

Secular feminists seek to establish a society where well-balanced individuals may thrive and exist with other gender identities. Whereas Islamic feminists, who operate towards the endpoint of creating an Islamic *umma*, are more concerned with the establishment of well-balanced families that would lead to a balanced Islamic society.⁷¹ Moreover, secular feminists in the Middle East have been known to separate between the private and public sphere of a woman's existence. Egyptian feminists fought for women's right to vote, for a place in governmental establishments and an acknowledgement of women's

⁶⁸ Orientalism is a term used to describe the West's depiction of Middle Eastern culture and history. Edward Said popularized and redefined this concept in his book *Orientalism*.

⁶⁹ At its birth, this concept was a historical one, but as political scientists and sociologists, such as Edward Said and Karam in her research 'Women, Islamisms and the State', began to explore the relationship of men and women in patriarchal societies, the concept of self and other became popular in the fields of gender and political studies.

⁷⁰ Omaima Abou Bakr, "Islamic Feminism: What's in a Name? Preliminary Reflections," *Middle East Women's Studies Review* 15–16 (2001): 1–2.

⁷¹ Elizabeth Warnock Fernea, *In Search of Islamic Feminism: One Woman's Global Journey* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 252.

irreplaceable role in Egypt's public social sphere.⁷² However, in regards to women's role in the private sphere, as mothers and wives, advocacy for a complementarity position was followed. Islamic feminism, on the other hand, defies this separation, and abolishes the idea of women's different roles in the public and private sphere.⁷³ Dr. Heba Raouf Ezzat is an academic who shares that common drive with Islamic feminists; she aims to "stretch the 'private' into the 'public', transcending and dissolving the distinctions people have made between these realms."⁷⁴ This she makes possible through the reinterpretation of the *Quran* and *sharia*. Women's rights are, thus, realized within an Islamic framework that includes *Quranic* texts, *hadiths* and the disciplines of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence). Ahmed-Ghosh (2008) explains that this combination of religious texts defines a woman's roles in the family unit, in her community and her "inclusion in the formation of the nation-state in which the individual is subsumed."⁷⁵

As mentioned before, secular feminists focus on the individual to ensure the attainment of human rights for each individual within a civil society that would ultimately advocate a democratic rule. In theory, Islamic feminism maintains this individuality. For example, also in theory, it accepts that women may occupy senior positions in an Islamic society, such as heads of state, leaders of congregational prayer, judges, and *muftis* (Muslim scholars who are defined as

⁷² Nemat Guenena and Nadia Wassef, *Unfulfilled Promises: Women's Rights* (Cairo: Population Council, 1999), 31.

⁷³ Badran, "Islamic Feminism Revisited."

⁷⁴ Maha Azzam, "Gender and the Politics of Religion in the Middle East," in *Feminism and Islam: Legal and Literary Perspectives*, ed. Mai Yamani (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 235.

⁷⁵ Ahmed-Ghosh, 106.

interpreters of Islamic *sharia* and *fiqh*), as the *Quran* addresses both man and woman equally “since all rules, orders and rights are revealed to the male and female without discrimination.”⁷⁶ Furthermore, the *Quran* unambiguously defines women “as the moral and spiritual equals of men and allows them to inherit and pass down property.”⁷⁷ However, according to the majority of Islamic feminists, traditional societies rooted in age-old patriarchal customs and traditions have had a major influence in distorting these rights.⁷⁸ With the growth of feminist movements in the Middle East and Asia, and the widening of the political and social space for women’s rights and women’s activism, traditional *mullas* (Islamic clergymen educated in Islamic theology) have increased in number, and grown more assertive in establishing their patriarchal and misogynistic rule and influence.⁷⁹ Modernist tools have appeared to challenge their traditionalist interpretations of gender differentiation, in the form of Islamic feminism’s application of *’ijtihad*. Islamic feminism’s methodologies centre on the practice of two significant methods: *’ijtihad* and *tafsīr* (interpretation of the *Quran*).⁸⁰ The process of *’ijtihad* enables Islamic feminists to analyze and reread the *Quran* and other texts that are dependent on the *Quran*, to pinpoint and highlight debates where patriarchal interpretations are evident. This process is paramount in the ideology of Islamic feminism, which is to advance gender equality through the texts on which Islam is based. Freidl asserts the importance of challenging older

⁷⁶ Heikal.

⁷⁷ Kay S. Hymowitz, “Why Feminism is AWOL on Islam,” *City Journal* (Winter 2003), accessed October 10, 2010, http://www.city-journal.org/html/13_1_why_feminism.html

⁷⁸ Tohidi, 8.

⁷⁹ Hymowitz.

⁸⁰ Badran, “Islamic Feminism: What’s in a Name?”

interpretations of the *Quran*, through the process of '*ijtihad*', as the practice of interpretation is transformed into a political process, where those who participate in the selection and deciphering of these holy texts were "unavoidably influenced, if not out-rightly motivated by the political programs and interests of those who control the formulation and dissemination of ideologies."⁸¹ There was - and there still is - a monopoly on the profession of '*ulama*' by men, who have the authority to interpret the *Quran*, and who are socially and legally accepted to practice '*ijtihad*'. In its essence, Islamic feminism questions the process of the creation of Islamic knowledge from its inception as a religion to the present day. Such practices should be feasible and more welcomed in Islamic societies than secular feminism, as Abdullahi an-Naim argues that

'Islamic rule and law are not top-down and unchanging; they're democratic, emerging out of a community consensus that derives from individual understandings of God's laws, without privileging the identity and status of the individual interpreter.'⁸²

When one examines the views of Islamic feminism and secular feminism in a predominantly patriarchal society and political system, it could be argued that Islamic feminism is the middle ground between secular feminism and patriarchal Islamism. Islamic feminism questions a women's place in society through the use of Islamic language and reference, thereby appeasing secular feminists' calls of equal representation. At the same time, it also uses the same tools that traditional and patriarchal units live by, but with a more modernist view. Badran

⁸¹ Erika Freidl, "Ideal Womanhood in Post-Revolutionary Iran" in *Mixed Blessings: Gender and Religious Fundamentalism Cross-Culturally*, eds. Judy Brink and Joan Mencher, (New York: Routledge, 1997), 146.

⁸² Abdullahi an-Naim, "The Dichotomy between Religious and Secular Discourse in Islamic Societies" in *Faith and Freedom: Women's Human Rights in the Muslim World*, ed Mahnaz Afkhami (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 56.

describes this in-between stance as a kind of “self-positioning that will then inform the speech, the action, the writing or the way of life adopted by someone who is committed to questioning Islamic epistemology as an expansion of their faith position and not a rejection of it.”⁸³ Islamic feminism’s strategic positioning enables it to be in a position of negotiation in Islamic and Muslim-dominated societies and nation-states. For example, with the increased popularity of the MB following the January 25 Revolution, the Muslim Sisters are currently in a strong position to negotiate the realisation of women’s rights within the framework of Islam and its religious texts. As mentioned earlier, it is yet to be found whether or not the Muslim Sisters share the same ideology and plan as the Islamic feminists, and whether or not the Muslim Sisters can be identified as Islamic feminists or just as Islamists who belong to an Islamist organization. Throughout the analysis chapters, the Muslim Sister’s performativity regarding issues of gender, such as their social activities, attire and language, is discussed. Historical accounts of the Muslim Sisters themselves, as well as academic and journalistic research efforts, have highlighted the Muslim Sisters’ persona over the past decades, making it easier to identify them and follow their activities. In effect, their self-positioning within the Egyptian society and the MB will be assessed through the analysis of their speech and language during their political assignment in Egypt’s parliament, in regard to women’s legal rights.⁸⁴ Furthermore, Badran asserts that one must understand that “Islamic feminism

⁸³ Cooke (2001), 61.

⁸⁴ A number of interviews conducted with politically active and socially active Muslim Sisters will reveal their reasons for engaging or avoiding political participation within the MB, and will share their input regarding the status of women’s rights in Egypt.

and Muslims' secular feminism are not in opposition to each other, rather they are mutually reinforcing."⁸⁵ The difference between the two is that Muslim secular feminists are able to accommodate other identities within their framework, i.e. creating a space for the inclusion of Egyptian Copts, as well as other activists that identify with other discourses such as nationalist, democratic and Arabist. This research effort argues that Islamic feminism and all forms of secular feminisms (whether nationalist, liberal, socialist, etc.) belong on the same spectrum and are not mutually exclusive. They may, at certain points in time and in certain events, clash and contradict, and they may be mutually reinforcing. Chapter three - historical background, will disclose both secular and Islamic strands of feminism in Egypt united under a nationalistic message, where both strands of feminism worked within their bounds to preserve the legitimacy of their respective political systems. It can be argued that this process was repeated during the 18-day revolution. However, Badran points out that it is always beneficial in the practice of theoretical analysis to remember that even though those different movements both engage in some form of gender activism and along the same spectrum, "women's moorings in divergent ideologies remain significant."⁸⁶

The Appeal of Islamic Feminism

What makes Islamic feminism, and its producers and users, worth following is that it appeals to many different strands of politically active women in

⁸⁵ Badran (2009), 329.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 162.

the Middle East and Asia.⁸⁷ Cooke asserts the importance of positioning in bridging the gap between women with an Islamic image, and those who choose not to identify with a religion or one self, as she explains that self-positioning helps understand how “women ‘claim,’ articulate, and practice feminism within Islam, getting beyond issues of identity.”⁸⁸ Islamic feminism equips feminists and gender activists with the necessary tools to effectively guide the empowerment of women under the growing Islamist trends and traditional patriarchal societies, towards laying the groundwork for the achievement of democratic principles and the safeguarding of equal rights for women, through the use of Islamic principles. Islamic feminism makes the ideas of democracy and modernity conceivable through the use of Islamic language and symbols.⁸⁹ While feminism may be identified by many different strands and ideologies, feminists that follow an Islamic doctrine claim one paramount identity: the Islamic one. Cooke explains that the label of Islamic feminism does not describe

“a fixed identity, but [it] create(s) a new, contingent subject position. This location confirms belonging in a religious community while allowing for activism on behalf of and with other women... to be feminists without fear that they be accused of being westernized and imitative.”⁹⁰

Further, the term “Islamic” combines people that associate themselves with the terms ‘Muslim’ and ‘Islamist’ and that have assigned themselves to questioning current Islamic jurisprudence as an “expansion of their faith position and not as a

⁸⁷ Due to its potential to resonate in the Muslim majority found in the Middle East, dozens of analysts that have been described as secular feminists or Islamists or Muslim feminists have written about Islamic feminism and have engaged other feminists in trying to assess its place and impact within Middle Eastern societies. For examples of those debates, refer to Moghadam (2004), Moghadam (2002), Ahmed-Ghosh (2008), Bahi (2011).

⁸⁸ Badran (2005), 15.

⁸⁹ Hymowitz and Badran, “Islamic Feminism: What's in a Name?”

⁹⁰ Cooke, 60.

rejection of it.”⁹¹ Islamic feminists view Islam as a world religion that acknowledges women’s life-cycles, and the different roles and responsibilities bestowed upon them at different times of their lives. For each role, a woman must be recognized and respected under the banner of Islam.⁹²

Nevertheless, the term Islamic feminism is yet to be fully accepted, especially amongst those intellectuals whose research efforts and writings tackle that same paradigm: creating a space for negotiation, understanding and compromise for gender activists in a largely patriarchal and Islamic setting. Experts and academics on the subject of women’s rights within Islam, such as Egypt’s Ezzat and Kazim, have rejected the label of ‘Islamic feminists’, yet again, due to the Western origin of the term feminism. In fact, Ezzat argues that feminists are “secularists who are fighting male domination...conflict is the main concept of their theory,”⁹³ and in so doing, they neglect what better serves women’s agency in the Middle East. She further argues that the space, in which secular Egyptian feminists mobilized, was quite different from that of any Islamist activist. The ‘holistic space’ for secularists was the nation-state, whereas for an Islamist such as herself, it will forever remain the Islamic polity - the *ūmma*.⁹⁴ Yet, one can argue that ‘Islamic feminist’ is the most suitable label to describe these women and their work. A professor in Cairo University, Ezzat has dedicated her work to re-examining *hadiths* and Islamic laws that concern Muslim women’s

⁹¹ Cooke, 60.

⁹² Ghada Karmi, “Women, Islam and Patriarchalism” in *Feminism and Islam: Legal and Literary Perspectives*, ed. Mai Yamani (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 71.

⁹³ Karim El-Gawhary and Heba Raouf Ezzat, “An Interview with Heba Raouf Ezzat,” *Middle East Report*, no. 191, (November - December 1994): 26, accessed November 5, 2011, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3012713>

⁹⁴ Badran (2009), 235.

rights, by assessing their authenticity and the reliability of their sources. Her analysis includes the examination of the historical incidents or cases in which these *sharia* laws were created or from which they were derived. Since Islamic jurisprudence or *fiqh* came to be in the ninth century, it has been heavily influenced by patriarchal rhetoric, which is evident in the contemporary *sharia* laws to which Muslims worldwide refer and follow. Ezzat attributes that decline of Islamic rhetoric, that supports pro-women Islamic practices and teachings, to the deterioration of women's living standards and social standing in some Islamic societies.⁹⁵ She argues that what made the Muslim women's plight seem even drearier was the Western vision of equality that is incompatible with Islamic societies. Ezzat explains that as Islamic literature started to embrace and adopt Western literature well into the modern era, the Western concepts of feminism strove to eliminate the physical, psychological and organic differences between men and women, as the very reason that held back women's right and freedoms, and not the patriarchal interpretations of a religion that had established women's rights over 1400 years ago.⁹⁶ Ezzat believes that it is the duty of any Islamic thinker to draw on the concept of equality found in Islam that 'is characterized by moderation' rooted in the perceptions and practices of '*Tawhid* (unity) and the presence of disagreement.'⁹⁷

In addition to Ezzat's efforts to reassess *Quranic* interpretations pertaining to women's rights, Kazim advocates Islam as the only context within

⁹⁵ Heba Raouf Ezzat, *al-Mar'a wal 'amal 'al-Siyasi: al Ru'iyah al-Islamiyya* [Women and political action: Islamic vision] (Washington D.C.: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1995), 60.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 62.

which women can attain their full rights. Kazim is known for her Islamic activism and for continually defending the veil in her weekly column. Her access to media enables her to discuss issues ranging from art and music to Islamic doctrines. When studying Islamic feminism, Badran advises to differentiate between Islamic feminism as an 'explicitly declared project - as an analytical term,' and Islamic feminism as an identity.⁹⁸ So, for example, while some female analysts may see Kazim's work as advocating the practice of women's equality and social justice guided by revised *Quranic* interpretations as Islamic feminism, other analysts, such as Ezzat, describe their efforts "as an Islamic project of rereading the *Quran*, women-centred readings of religious texts, or 'scholarship-activism'."⁹⁹

Islamic Feminism and Egypt: Its Relation with the State and the MB

Islamic feminists believe that it is within their rights to take part in the politics that shape their country's laws that have direct effects on the livelihood of women.¹⁰⁰ Arab and Islamist politics should not be confined to men, but it should reopen the doors that were opened once before to women's participation; when women had given their vote (*bay'a*) to the Prophet over 1500 years ago.¹⁰¹ A generous amount of research highlights the correlation and causation between the destructive practices of the Egyptian regime and their effects on empowering women politically in both secular and Islamist circles, with the latter group

⁹⁸ Badran, "Islamic Feminism: What's in a Name?"

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ For example, Iran post revolution started to implement stricter laws, calling for women to retreat back to their homes. It was within this construct that women felt it was imperative to engage the Islamist framework and Islamist rule, with their Islamic feminist theories and practices. See Badran "Between Secular and Islamic Feminism."

¹⁰¹ Cooke (2001), 104.

suffering more due to their MB affiliation.¹⁰² Similarly, defining modernity and modernization as a Western construct, in the face of the growing phenomenon of political Islam, has pushed international politics down a course of action where women's rights and livelihood are used by both the West and the Middle East to navigate the political minefield of human rights and the Islamizing of state; and ultimately to assert their dominance and power on the global scene. As for state policies, nothing has been more detrimental to the feminist cause as the thriving of authoritarian practices in Egypt.

The State and/or Ruling Elite

Prominent writers, such as Karam, have extensively covered the debate about the effects of authoritarianism on civil society organizations and human rights. Karam explained the correlation of the unhealthy relationship between the Egyptian regime, and political and civil society organizations; which house Islamic and secular feminists, through the application of Gramscian¹⁰³ realist theories.¹⁰⁴ Similarly, many analysts have discussed the phenomenon of electoral authoritarianism in the Middle East, where autocratic or authoritarian rulers employ democratic tools to maintain a level of legitimacy while their power remains uncontested and unchanging.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² See Karam (1998), Baron (2005), Moghadam (1995), Badran (1995), Shehadeh (2003).

¹⁰³ A leading Marxist philosopher in Italy before World War II, Antonio Gramsci wrote about the relationship between state and civil society, and the struggle for the destruction or attainment of hegemony.

¹⁰⁴ Karam (1998), 5.

¹⁰⁵ Schedlar, Brumburg and Springborg have written numerous articles and books detailing these phenomena of electoral authoritarianism and liberal autocracy, that seems to be heavily practiced in the MENA region and most developing countries.

Initially, this qualitative piece of work intended to explain the nature of female political participation in the MB by focusing on their activities prior, during and after the parliamentary elections of 2000, 2005 and 2010, seeing that the number of MB female members running for seats in Parliament had increased to eighteen women. However, with the arrest and forceful alienation of MB officials and supporters from the polling stations in October 2010, none of the MB representatives were elected. With the January 25, 2011 revolution and the dissolution of the authoritarian regime that previously controlled the dynamics of Egypt's politics, the activities of the MB and the Muslim Sisters will be analyzed in the new political climate: in the absence of a constrictive authoritarian presence. Following the 18-day uprising, the SCAF temporarily stepped in during Egypt's phase of governmental transition to fill in the power vacuum until a new president was elected. Consequently, with the election of a MB member, Morsy has carried himself much like an authoritarian ruler claiming that his imposition of strict laws will protect the goals of the new emerging state of Egypt.¹⁰⁶ Since this case study of the Muslim Sisters cannot be detached from the political climate, a base of realist theories to explain the nature of the Egyptian government is needed for this research.¹⁰⁷ This sets the stage for a presentation and analysis of several obstacles that affect democratic practices such as the implementation of a nation-wide human rights agenda. A focus on the role of Egypt's authoritarian

¹⁰⁶ "Morsi's Mistake," *Editorial - Financial Times*, November 23, 2012, accessed November 30, 2012, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/49f834aa-3575-11e2-bf77-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2HtkHwdY>

¹⁰⁷ Realism plays on the same theme as Gramscian theories, where the state is the most important actor in world politics and civil society, and welfare is secondary due to the state's top-down approach and the valuing of state security over human security. The Egyptian regime has followed that same ideology due to its authoritarian and military rule, thereby overlooking the welfare of civil society groups - such as women's groups - for the benefit of state hegemony.

political system is needed throughout the analysis chapters regarding the Muslim Sisters, and how this system facilitates or inhibits new agents and their forward-thinking attitude, with the help of a religious group that was previously thought of as oppressive.

Mirroring the spectrum of Islamic feminism and secular forms of feminism in the Middle Eastern region, authoritarianism and democracy are not mutually exclusive, and also exist on the same continuum of types of rule and government. The concept of electoral authoritarianism encompasses both competitive authoritarian regimes and non-competitive regimes.¹⁰⁸ In the case of Egypt, it may be perceived as a competitive authoritarian regime where opposition parties compete for power. Nonetheless, in the case of the MB, it has been declared an illegal entity due to its religious characteristics, thereby eliminating any chance of an effective and competitive multiparty election in Egypt. Egypt was seen as a non-competitive authoritarian regime practicing an extreme form of electoral authoritarianism, where competition is unfair and seriously crippled by an absence of free elections as voter intimidation and fraud were common practices.¹⁰⁹ According to Levitsky and Way's definition, a competitive authoritarian regime lacks at least one of the following significant markers of a democracy: "(1) free elections; (2) broad protection of civil liberties;

¹⁰⁸ Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 16.

¹⁰⁹ Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, "Competitive Authoritarianism: The Origins and Dynamics of Hybrid Regimes in the Post-Cold War Era," 1-88, accessed August 20, 2013, <http://iis-db.stanford.edu/pubs/24290/Levitsky-Way-Stanford.pdf>

and (3) a reasonably even playing field.”¹¹⁰ Egypt is a non-competitive authoritarian regime where:

“(1) major candidates are excluded (via bans, imprisonment, or exile); (2) repression or legal control makes it impossible for opposition parties to sustain public campaigns; [and] (3) fraud is so massive that there is virtually no observable relationship between public preferences and electoral results.”¹¹¹

However, during the decades of the Egyptian regime’s oppressive practices, the MB and its female members continued to participate in elections and provide an opposing voice to the regime, albeit in a limited manner. Lindberg explains that “by choosing to contest elections and accept the outcome of that contest, opposition groups greatly enhance the probability of the regimes to become democratic.”¹¹² Brumberg argues that the Egyptian regime may present a “degree of acquiescence and sometimes even support from both secular and some Islamist opposition groups.”¹¹³ Such agreements prolong the validity and life of liberal autocratic regimes and their methods, at the expense of democratic practices and women’s rights and issues.

Undemocratic practices of statist repression by the authoritarian Egyptian regime were regularly enforced through the oppressive use of the law and the military. Despite the regime’s best efforts, however, the Islamic organizations remained popular.¹¹⁴ Their popularity is due to their taking up the role of the failing government by funding and supporting the majority population, the lower

¹¹⁰ Levitsky and Way, “Competitive Authoritarianism,” 6.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Staffan I. Lindberg, “Why Do Opposition Parties Boycott Elections?” in *Electoral Authoritarianism* edited by Andreas Schedler (Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 2006), 256.

¹¹³ Daniel Brumberg, “The Trap of Liberalized Autocracy,” *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 4 (October 2002): 57.

¹¹⁴ The 2011 referendum vote reflects the Brotherhood’s popularity amongst Egyptians and sheds light on the magnitude of its voter support.

classes, through charitable and social activities.¹¹⁵ Such popular backing posed a threat to the regime's stability, creating a power struggle. It drove the state to use legal and military tools to break down and dissolve the MB's power and influence. To reiterate the MB's success in the Egyptian society, Landman states that studies on "social movements demonstrate how changing political opportunities intersect with movement activity, as well as how the time-dependent dynamics of social movements can be described as a 'cycle of protest'."¹¹⁶ State power is seen to overpower movements like the MB, and all but ignore feminist movements. Feminist movements have gained ground on the political and developmental levels, but such advancements were only allowed to take place with the consent and control of the state.¹¹⁷ After Egypt's independence in 1922, Egyptian nationalists came to power, and the feminist movements that operated under the nationalist discourse were all but forgotten, as all forces were focused on building a new nation. The disappearance of political support led to the creation of several feminist organizations by the women themselves.

The Egyptian government's authoritative practices can be traced back to Nasser who took control of Al-Azhar to gain religious legitimacy as a powerful

¹¹⁵ The most telling time of the government's failure to assist the Egyptian masses was during the 1992 earthquake. Refer to Hesham Al-Awadi, *In Pursuit Of Legitimacy: The Muslim Brothers And Mubarak, 1982–2000* (London: Tauris Academic Studies: 2004), 149-151.

¹¹⁶ Todd Landman, *Issues and Methods in Comparative Politics: An Introduction* (Routledge: London, 2003), 231.

¹¹⁷ Despite the many female activists who took part in the nationalist movements and protests in the 1930s, and in socialist movements in the 1950s; women only gained the right to vote when it was deemed suitable for the Nasser regime. Some may argue that it was Doria Shafik's hunger strike that forced the government to allow women to gain their full citizenship rights, but it is worth mentioning that Shafik had held many of those strikes before without results. Moreover, she was not immune to harassment or government crackdowns before and after women gaining the right to vote. Refer to Chapter Three - Historical Background.

tool to fight off the MB's popularity.¹¹⁸ The combination of the leading religious institution of Sunni teachings in the Middle East and a patriarchal rule, further cemented the tradition of manipulation of religious rhetoric through the continuation of patriarchal politics. It was also during the Nasser era that women were given full political rights, thanks to the persistent efforts of several secular feminist movements at the time.¹¹⁹ That meant that all Egyptians - men and women - were to have the right to vote, be treated equally under the law, and had the same labor rights irrespective of gender. However, Islamic feminists may have a better chance in achieving some kind of political autonomy through operating within an Islamic framework. By using the same tools and constructs of religion and tradition set forth by lawmakers and traditionalists, Islamic feminists may break through the wall that divides women's rights (as a Western concept) from a society rooted in Islamic ideals. By engaging Egypt's authoritarian structure through the use of the same language, idea and symbols of Islam, Islamic feminists may create a common political ground from which other agents, such as the state and the MB, can negotiate the reformulation of women's status regarding their social and political rights. In effect, the agency of Islamic feminists has been viewed "not as a synonym for resistance to relations of domination, but as a capacity for action that historically specific relations of subordination enable and create."¹²⁰ The problem lies in the lesser-developed public laws found in

¹¹⁸ Tamir Mostafa, "Conflict and Cooperation Between State and Religious Institutions in Contemporary Egypt", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 32 (2005): 5.

¹¹⁹ Secular feminist Doria Shafik held several hunger strikes in protest of women's inability to vote. Refer to Roded, 27.

¹²⁰ Saba Mahmood "Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent: Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival," *Cultural Anthropology* 16, no. 2 (2001): 203.

Islamic jurisprudence in comparison to private laws, where the shortcomings of public law is due to overbearing secular authoritarian regimes in Islamic societies, which strove to suppress the reinterpretation and innovation of Islamic *fiqh* and jurisprudence; and which depends on political and social freedoms. The study and growth of private laws continued, as it did not represent an immediate threat to the power of these authoritarian regimes. The association of Islam with the ideology of feminism may be more appealing to Muslim women, as it would enable them to criticize the actions of the state that may appear detrimental to women's rights, through the use of traditional language and culture that are dependent on Islamic rhetoric. If Egypt's religious scholars and Muslim citizens were allowed to discuss and improve Islamic *fiqh*, women's rights would be realized and protected, under the direction and supervision of an Islamic framework. It is therefore the duty of Islamic feminists, and Muslims in general, not to abide by authoritarian regimes and their laws, and to find a safe space - i.e. a way to engage society without offending the traditional segment - to discuss the alleviation of women's laws and its shortcomings through the realization of women's rights through the use of Islam and its teachings.¹²¹ Such a tactic will allow the patriarchal society to more readily accept and support the new status of women in society. Inevitably, such acceptance and a process of dialogue will result and lead different concepts to overlap and integrate. As Ezzat explains, the concept of justice becomes in sync with that of equality; similar to understanding

¹²¹ Mahbouba Ben Nasr, Review of al-Mar'a wal 'amal 'al-Siyasi: al Ru'ya al-Islamiyya, [Women and Political Action: Islamic Vision] by Heba Raouf Ezzat, *Islamiyya Al-Ma 'rifa, Readings and Reviews*, accessed January 10, 2013, http://www.eiiit.org/resources/eiiit/eiiit/eiiit_article_read.asp?articleID=776

the definitions of one's right and one's duty, thereby ensuring a safer and more equitable passage towards the realization of women's rights.¹²²

Islamic feminism as an idea, appeared in lieu of the Islamist wave in Egypt, when people grew disillusioned with the failure of secular rule that did not succeed in improving Egypt's deteriorating economy post-Nasser and the 1956 and 1967 wars. From the 1970's onwards, the nation's economic strife gave way to many socio-economic problems such as an increase in crime rates and drug use.¹²³ Islamist rhetoric grew popular in the 1970s, evident in the number of Islamist movements in Egypt's political and social atmosphere at the time, and with the resurrection of the MB and the growth of other militant Islamist movements.¹²⁴

This new Islamist discourse presented the disillusioned majority with another option of restoring its ailing nation, and that could unite people who viewed Egypt as a nation and as an *ūmma*, i.e. Egyptians who were bound to one religion and those who had pledged their loyalty to one nation. Egypt began moving towards a more conservative atmosphere, evident in the increasing number of women adopting the veil, as part of their everyday routine and their newfound Islamized identity. This conservative atmosphere had adverse effects on women's lives; it opened areas for women that were previously 'men-only' areas, such as mosques, academic theological debates and discussions of Islamic law.¹²⁵ An unprecedented number of Egyptian women at that time had

¹²² Ben Nasr.

¹²³ Azzam, 218.

¹²⁴ Margot Badran, "Between Secular and Islamic Feminisms," 8.

¹²⁵ Tohidi, 135.

succeeded in attaining higher degrees and were entering the workforce as competent contributors to Egypt's economy. The combination of Islamist currents and education equipped Egyptian women with new ways to further promote women's equality.¹²⁶ Islamic feminism seemed to fit the mould, as it was the only tool acceptable within a conservative, largely Muslim population. Islamic feminism was seen as a force against both the aged traditionalist patriarchy that still ruled Egypt, and the new modern and Western influences.

Egyptian political history attests to the successful use of symbols, political and religious rhetoric in appealing to the masses. In Egypt, with the MB's glorified message: "Islam is the solution", symbols and the daily usage of 'patriotism',¹²⁷ 'Pan-Arabism' and 'Islam'; the idea of cultural influences is relevant, integral in fact, to the study of Middle Eastern political culture. The MB dominated the civil society as they were dependent on luring supporters through the use of cultural content and symbols. This can also be described by Gramscian concepts of "counter-hegemonic struggle and war of position, and culture/identity oriented new social movements."¹²⁸ Most of the MB's informal gatherings comprised of MB members and MB supporters take place in the private sphere, and are mobilized by the Muslim Sisters. For each nation-state, there exists a range of symbols and 'rhetorical practices' that plays a big part in the mobilisation of the people for or against the government in question¹²⁹. Post-structuralist theory¹³⁰

¹²⁶ Badran (2009), 330.

¹²⁷ Meir Hatina, *Identity Politics In the Middle East: Liberal Thought and Islamic Challenge in Egypt*, (Tauris Academic Studies: London, 2007), 20.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹²⁹ Lisa Wedeen, "Conceptualizing Culture: Possibilities for Political Science," *American Political Science Review* 96, no. 4 (December 2002): 718.

affirms this idea; it maintains that cultural influences and tools are responsible for determining the nature or purpose of organizations, governmental entities and even economies. The MB's assigned gender-specific roles in the labour force, and the gender attachment to both the public (men's domain), and private (women's domain) spheres will also be considered. Again, with regards to the MB, it is vital to evaluate its members' views and understanding of a secular government and regime structure and how those serve their political message. From an Islamist point of view, and in accordance with a historical standpoint, citizens are loyal to the concept of the *umma* and not to the state.¹³¹ They pledge their allegiance to the law of *sharia* and not to the president or legislative assembly. For Islamists, *din wa dawla* (religion and state) are united, where one cannot exist without the other. However, some reformist thinkers have attempted to shift from the concept of *din wa dawla*, to defining Islam as a religion contingent upon the existence of *din wa 'umma* (religion and community).¹³² This re-definition has served Islamist entities and political parties well in disengaging from nationalistic sentiments and shows of patriotism "in the name of the *ummah* and to understand the suffering of Muslims in other lands as their own."¹³³ In

¹³⁰Post-structuralists reject the idea that there exists one theory that can provide an explanation of social and cultural phenomena and movements, where there is no one essential form to a cultural product and there are several signifiers that come together to create a culture or a political climate. In the case of feminist movements, Mahmoud argues that the theme of poststructuralist feminist theories is always based on a concept of liberation, where its nature and purpose thrives on the idea of resistance against the same signifiers and variables that seek to define their freedom and place in society. See Mahmood, "Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent," 208.

¹³¹ Augustus Richard Norton, "Thwarted Politics: The Case of Egypt's Hizb Al-Wasat" in *Remaking Muslim Politics: Pluralism, Contestation, Democratization*, edited by Robert W. Hefner (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), 144.

¹³² Norton, 144.

¹³³Peter Mandaville, "Sufis And Salafis: The Political Discourse Of Transnational Islam," in *Remaking Muslim Politics: Pluralism, Contestation, Democratization*, edited by Robert W. Hefner

effect, Islamist political parties exist to promote the Islamic way of life of implementing *sharia* laws rather than the laws of a secular state.¹³⁴ However, the reassessment of Islamic texts as part of the Islamic feminists' aim to highlight the likelihood of patriarchal contextualization of Islamic texts and *hadiths* which may have been re-interpreted differently with each passing generation; results in a negative reaction from the Islamic community because of the secular Western image that is attached to such terms.

The MB's history stands as a testament to the success of Islamist movements in adopting democratic methods and tools such as civil society organizations and political parties.¹³⁵ Karam applies Foucault's analysis of power and Gramsci's theory in regards to the relationship between unequal powers, and the continuous interaction between them. Karam's book details the same primary actors this paper seeks to analyze. The focus of her argument points to one type of relationship, however:

"It is the relationship between unequals that is important for our analysis of the Egyptian situation. Neither Islamists, feminists nor the state actually share equal power relations...When analyzing the relationship between Islamists and the state, both forces are effectively playing an active role. The state dominates (in the sense of force and coercion) this relationship. Islamists, through their successful social programmes and political alliances, are simultaneously hegemonizing political discourses of legitimacy, as well as attempting to Islamize state and society."¹³⁶

(New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), 314.

¹³⁴ A. Y. Dede, "Islamism, State Control over Religion and Social Identity: Turkey and Egypt." Unpublished PhD Thesis Dissertation. Western Michigan University, August 2008, 40 and Mandaville, "Sufis And Salafis: The Political Discourse Of Transnational Islam," 308.

¹³⁵ See Al-Awadi (2004) and Mohammed Zahid, *The Muslim Brotherhood and Egypt's Succession Crisis: The Politics of Liberalisation and Reform in the Middle East*. (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2010).

¹³⁶ Karam (1998), 13.

In effect, the ruling party and the elite society that supports it are the ones holding the proverbial stick. The carrot is represented by the façade of a democratic society, eagerly reinforced by other political parties who hope to dominate the political arena. In the end, the party that shines the brightest will unseat the elite-governed NDP. In 1995, the MB decided to participate in future legislative elections. Since that important decision, the MB has been the target of the state's continuous oppressive tactics. According to Karam, the state's reaction can be best described in Gramscian terms where "state discourse vis-à-vis Islamism is dominant ... In other words, state repression underlines the state's inability to obtain Islamists' consent to the status quo."¹³⁷ The ruling body and the type of government in place directly affected the successes and failures that women activists have made during Egypt's modern history. However, it is yet to be seen how women's rights in general and those of the Muslim Sisters in particular, will fare under a MB-dominated government and president.

The Muslim Sisters: Islamic Feminists or Plain Islamists?

This research work sets out to determine whether the Muslim Sisters are empowered within the ranks of the patriarchal MB and its political party the FJP. More specifically, in regards to female empowerment, what do the Muslim Sisters perceive as being empowered within the Islamist doctrine and practice of the MB and FJP? There is evidence that Islamist women have begun to question male dominance, as they believe that this dominance surpasses the limits of what is

¹³⁷ Karam (1998), 15.

considered the right Islamic boundaries. Abdel-Latif's and Ottaway's research work¹³⁸ on the women in the MB before the revolution, revealed that the Muslim Sisters were questioning their place and status within the MB, thereby transgressing the bounds of what the MB considers to be the correct Islamic parameters. The Muslim Sisters pragmatically chose to work outside the margins of a feminist movement and within an Islamist movement in the hope of achieving their demands of better representation and opportunities within traditional parameters. Women in the MB were no longer accepting of being relegated to the side-lines of the MB, with the sole aim of assisting the Brothers from a separate unit affiliated with the MB hierarchy, but not completely part of it.¹³⁹

In the past, the authoritarian Egyptian state impeded both the growth of feminism and Islamist movements. In the present time, the positioning of the MB and the Sisters has changed within society and state. No longer a banned movement and armed with a political party, the Muslim Sisters are struggling between their affiliation to a powerful Islamist movement and their descriptive representation within the Parliament. The following chapters will analyze the Muslim Sisters' public and private roles as both the women of the MB and as Egyptian female citizens; as well as the Muslim Sisters' substantive and/or descriptive presentation within the MB/FJP and as MPs in Egypt's Parliament.

The Muslim Sisters reached Parliament with four women representing the FJP, significantly larger than any other party or alliance of secular or religious agendas. In the traditionalist society and state, the Muslim Sisters have fulfilled

¹³⁸ Refer to Abdel-Latif and Ottaway (2007), Abdel-Latif, (2008) and Abdel-Latif (2010).

¹³⁹ For more on the MB's organizational structure, refer to Mitchell, *The Society Of Muslim Brothers*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1969).

Egyptian women's desires in achieving competent female participation within Parliament. In effect, the Muslim Sisters were looked upon - and viewed themselves - as a descriptive representation to the plight of the Egyptian woman. However, during their short period of participation in Parliament, they have been accused of being nothing more than a symbolic representation, which usually occurs when the current government or governing entity seeks to include subgroups and minorities in its attempt to 'verify' its legitimacy and democratic standing.¹⁴⁰ Despite the fact that the Muslim Sisters are part of the vast religious majority in Egypt and part of the most powerful social movement, the Sisters have found their voices within a secular space and with the use of democratic tools. In other words, it can be argued that the Sisters have attained equal status within their national or secular society but not within the MB. However, their newfound positioning with society and their descriptive representation in Parliament does not necessarily amount to substantive representation or make them advocates for women's rights. Tohidi warns that "spiritual feminism and faith-based feminists cannot be much different from religious fundamentalists if they do not respect the freedom of choice and impose their version of feminism on secular, laic and atheist feminists."¹⁴¹ Further, what is very troubling in the rise of any religious ideology is its possible intolerance of other views, which will inevitably result in another form of totalitarian rule. The same could be said for the Muslim Sisters' brand of feminism or social mobilization, whether Islamic feminist or Islamist. What the Muslim Sisters choose to adopt from the range of

¹⁴⁰ Jennifer M. Piscopo, "Rethinking Descriptive Representation: Rendering Women in Legislative Debate," *Parliamentary Affairs* 64, no. 3 (2011): 448.

¹⁴¹Tohidi, 141.

political and social issues during their roles as MP's and FJP members will determine their level of willingness to revert back to the basics of human respect and dignity, and band together with the rest of Egypt's female activist in fighting for women's freedom of choice and empowerment.

The interplay of state power, MB's popularity and competence in both the economic and political field and Islamist feminists' newfound confidence and assertion of their message of women's justice and equality within the Egyptian society, has paved the way for the Muslim Sisters to achieve 'Islamic women's rights' in their country. In the document, '*aqidat al-Jama'a*, the organization's doctrine, which was created in the 1930s with the formation of the MB, the citizenship rights of women were stipulated alongside those of men. The document discussed the family unit, the private space of the home, the public space of the Egyptian society and economic and political institutions. This doctrine later became a "measure of the Brotherhood's ability to leave its cultural mark on secular society."¹⁴² While the MB constitution did not shun women to their homes to work dutifully and solely on raising future generations, it did, however, limit women's political and social participation, thereby providing women within the organization with an active yet limited role of engaging the MB's vision of "shared participation of co-religionists as they held out the promise of a new utopia."¹⁴³

¹⁴² Mervat F. Hatem, "Egyptian Discourses on Gender and Political Liberalization: Do Secularist and Islamist Views Really Differ?" *Middle East Journal* 48, no. 4 (Autumn, 1994): 671, accessed May 28, 2012, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4328746>

¹⁴³ Badran, "Between Secular and Islamic Feminisms," 9.

When assessing the Muslim Sisters' stance within the MB, the FJP and their social activities; the Sisters' identity could be seen as: 1) Islamic feminists, trying to achieve women's equality within the boundaries of Islam and the rights it bestows on Muslim women, or 2) Islamists seeking to further the MB's success and achievements without necessarily voicing a clear women's rights agenda.

The analysis chapters four through nine, will examine why the Muslim Sisters are not assigned to senior positions within the MB, however it is important to note at this point that, currently, the Muslim Sisters are absent from the higher echelons of the MB structure.¹⁴⁴ According to the male members of the MB, one major reason for this relates to security concerns posed by previous authoritarian regimes in the form of police crackdowns and arrests that targeted MB members.¹⁴⁵ However, after the January 25 revolution and the MB's new public role, that reason no longer applies. Will the MB, then, support the advancement of the Sisters within the organization and political party, or will the MB fail to integrate the Muslim Sisters into the MB's organizational structure? If the Sisters choose to adopt the ideas and practices on which Islamic feminism relies, they could become the pioneers of such an ideology and transform into a movement in Egypt. In effect, the Sisters' position of power within the MB may prove pivotal in regards to the advancement of Islamic feminism, where as Badran explains "it is not so much that the message is discredited (as it is becoming increasingly difficult to pretend that gender equality and social justice are alien to Islam), but

¹⁴⁴ Refer to Appendix A.

¹⁴⁵ Omayma Abdellatif, Marina Ottaway, and Dialika Krahe, "The Muslim Sisterhood: Visions of Female Identity in the New Egypt," *Speigel Online International*, April 1, 2011, accessed June 2, 2011, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,754250-2,00.html>.

the messenger.”¹⁴⁶ The position of Islamic feminism as the ‘in-between’ ground of the opposing views, secular feminism and patriarchal Islamism, has brought it closer to the plight of secular feminists due to their shared goal of attaining women’s equality and due to their common challenge. It is still unclear whether the Muslim Sisters call for women’s equality, or for the expansion and advancement of the MB. One has to bear in mind that Islamic feminism has yet to transform into a social movement as its secular counterparts have done in the past.¹⁴⁷ The development of Islamic feminist theory is still on-going, with *tafsīr* at the core of its message, and no clear indication as to whether it will succeed where secular feminism has faltered in Egyptian politics.¹⁴⁸

Al-Ghazali: Islamic Feminist or Islamist?

The idea of Islamic feminism has existed alongside the activities of the Muslim Sisters and their Division. Yet, Islamic feminism’s first encounter with the MB can be embodied in the anomaly that was Zaynab al-Ghazali. A former member of the Egyptian Feminist Union (EFU), al-Ghazali left to create her own organization titled the Muslim Ladies Association (MLA) because she did not

¹⁴⁶ Badran, “Between Secular and Islamic Feminisms,” 23.

¹⁴⁷ Social movements depend on collective action, where Islamic feminists come together and unite for their cause of realising women’s rights within an Islamist framework. This has yet to happen in Egypt, where there are academics and activists that write about the potential success of Islamic feminism in theory, but have yet to form a movement or an organization to present their ideals and resist existing governing entities. See Jonathan Christiansen, “Four Stages of Social Movements” *EBSCO Research Starters* (2009): 1-7, accessed February 15, 2013, <http://www.ebscohost.com/uploads/imported/thisTopic-dbTopic-1248.pdf>

¹⁴⁸ In the case of secular feminism, it has only succeeded in the form of state feminism, where women activists were able to achieve some of their goals by depending on the assistance of formal bureaucratic structures and Egypt’s elite that occupy those authoritative structures. See Mervat F. Hatem. “Economic and Political Liberation in Egypt and the Demise of State Feminism” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 24, no. 2 (May, 1992): 19-43, accessed May 28, 2012, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/164296>

agree with the EFU's secular and Western-influenced principles regarding women's rights under nationalist movements. Al-Ghazali's language and self-positioning regarding women's activism changed throughout her life. Cooke points out that she "positioned herself as gender-neutral Islamist in her *Qur'anic* exegesis (al-Ghazali 1994), but as an Islamic feminist in her prison memoirs (al-Ghazali, 1986)."¹⁴⁹

Al-Ghazali was an exception to the majority of the Muslim Sisters, if not all of them. She started her political and social career by breaking off from a secular feminist organization to start her own Islam-centric women's organization. Her beginnings indicate that she had always focused on women's rights and female empowerment. Her resistance to pooling her MLA resources with that of al-Banna's may have been indicative of the divergent views and agendas that the MLA and Muslim Sisters may have had. Another indication of al-Ghazali's feminist leanings was her decision to temporarily join forces with that of the *Lajna al-Nisa'iyya lil-Muqawama al-Sha'abiyya* (The Women's Committee for Popular Resistance), in the wake of the 1952 Canal Zone violent incident.¹⁵⁰ This combining of resources saw al-Ghazali cooperate with communist and feminist Inji Aflatun, as well as male nationalists, for a common cause.¹⁵¹ Yet, her use of religious rhetoric, such as issues of morality, one's duty to God and responsibility towards an Islamic *umma*, is revealing of her Islamist persona. Her speeches

¹⁴⁹ Cooke, 61.

¹⁵⁰ In the months leading up to the 1952 revolution, *fedayeen* (Egyptian resistance forces) started attacking British troops in the British controlled Suez Canal Zone. One of those attacks led to the death of several British soldiers. After failed negotiation attempts between the two sides, the British troops attacked the Egyptian police (who have been protecting the *fedayeen*), wounding over 100 police officers and killing 41. Refer to John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation: The Retreat From Empire in the Post Cold War World* (London: Macmillan, 1988), 208.

¹⁵¹ Badran (2009), 31.

were void of concern with issues of female equality. However, Lewis insists that al-Ghazali's life mission was feminist in nature, dedicated to establishing equal rights for women within an Islamic society, but her dislike of any movement or sentiment, that was influenced by Western forces, made her reject feminist movements in Egypt as imperialist.¹⁵² With Nasser as president and the eventual closing down of most non-profit organizations, al-Ghazali was left with no choice but to join the MB's cause as a Muslim Sister and to continue her work as a preacher and political activist under the banner of the MB, which inevitably resulted in her arrest and torture. As the MB continued to be banned and targeted by the authorities, al-Ghazali worked to ensure that the MB continued its work in guiding the Egyptian society towards the vision of an Islamic *ūmma* solely governed by Islamic *sharia*. Yet, Cooke points out that al-Ghazali's thoughts, as expressed in her writings, fluctuated depending on the topic at hand. For example, in her publications that focused on the *Quran* and its teachings, she positioned herself as an Islamist, whereas in her memoirs of her days in Nasser's prison she asserted herself as an Islamic feminist.¹⁵³

With her release from jail in 1971, she continued her *da'wa* activities, preaching to and advising the Muslim Sisters and women in general, to abandon Western concepts of job equality and career plans, and to focus on building a strong core for the Islamic society that will inevitably become a reality in Egypt.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Pauline Lewis, "Zainab al-Ghazali: Pioneer of Islamist Feminism," *Journal of History* (Winter 2007): 10, accessed December 20, 2011
http://www.umich.edu/~historyj/pages_folder/articles/W07_Lewis.pdf

¹⁵³ Cooke (2001), 61.

¹⁵⁴ Soroya Duval, "New Veils and New Voices: Islamist Women's Groups in Egypt" in *Women and Islamization: Contemporary Dimensions of Discourses on Gender Relations*, eds. Karin Ask and Marit Tjomsland (Oxford: Oxford International Publishers, 1998), 54 and Lewis, 3.

Al-Ghazali argued that women need not succeed in both the private and public spheres; arguing that only a man, as decreed by God, can bear such responsibilities. Essentially, she did not comprehend why women wanted to “carry the double burden of family and work simultaneously.”¹⁵⁵ As opposed to Islamic feminists like Ezzat and Kazim, al-Ghazali did not make it a priority to contest existing Islamic *fiqh* to challenge patriarchal language, influences and their dated Islamic interpretations, to liberate women and present them with their legitimate Islamic rights. Nevertheless, all three women viewed women’s issues through an Islamic lens and they have all been politically active by joining demonstrations, giving talks, organizing protests and writing politically infused articles and editorials. They have campaigned first and foremost for Islam, but also dedicated a large portion of their energy to women-related issues.¹⁵⁶ Al-Ghazali focused on the ways Muslim women and the Muslim Sisters can help the MB guide Egypt’s mostly Muslim - but rather secular - society, towards an Islamic way of life and governance. She asserted, in congruence with the MB’s ideologies, that a woman’s priority is that of her home, and when her duties have been fulfilled and her children have grown, only then could she consider joining the workforce, if needed.¹⁵⁷ Mahmood’s research on *da’iyat* (women engaged in the *da’wa* activities) like al-Ghazali, reveal that they do not rely on feminist language or any notion of equality, but they do invoke the language of ‘rights’ to justify their access to sacred knowledge, where the female bearer of these rights

¹⁵⁵ Zaynab al-Ghazali, “Al-mara’a al-muslima: ila ayn?” [The Muslim Women: Where to?] In *Humum al mara’a al-muslima wa al- da’iya Zaynab ai-Ghazali*. [The Woes of the Muslim Woman and of the da’iya Zaynab al-Ghazali] edited by Ibn al-Hashimi (Cairo: Dar al-I’tisam, 1990), 115.

¹⁵⁶ Karam, 206.

¹⁵⁷ Fernea, 241.

is not regarded as being on equal footing with her male counterpart, but more of a complementary being.”¹⁵⁸ Also, *da’iyat*, like al-Ghazali, do not engage in the argument against the prohibition of women’s delivery of the Friday prayer and sermon, or whether women should serve as *Imams* in mosques; much like other Islamic feminists in Iran, Pakistan or the Maghreb region.¹⁵⁹ In contrast, Ezzat’s MA thesis, aimed to prove - through the reliance on Islamic jurisprudence and *fiqh* - that women will be able to occupy the highest possible positions within a society, as long as they have the necessary qualifications. Essentially, she demonstrated that Islamic jurisprudence values a person’s qualifications rather than their gender.¹⁶⁰

Al-Ghazali’s discussions and publications rarely made any reference to the drawbacks brought on by reliance on harmful traditions and norm in areas of human development, that have a negative effect on women and children in rural and urban areas. Moreover, al-Ghazali did not call for the Muslim Sisters to run for governmental positions or nominate themselves in parliamentary elections. She did, however, point out the important and irreplaceable role of women as campaign members and voters, encouraging women to engage in Egypt’s political sphere by voting for MB members who will strive to reinstate Islamic *sharia* in Egypt from within the government.¹⁶¹ Nevertheless, al-Ghazali did champion women’s rights in certain aspects; when she sent a memorandum to

¹⁵⁸ Mahmood (2005), 71.

¹⁵⁹ Middle Eastern feminists such as Fatima Mernissei and Haideh Moghissi continually urge women to contest a women’s right to lead in prayers or address both men and women in Friday sermons as an *Imam*.

¹⁶⁰ Karam, 223.

¹⁶¹ Lewis, 45.

the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, demanding that girls receive an education.¹⁶² However, such an initiative is not indicative of al-Ghazali's desire to improve the lives of girls and to empower them with the necessary tools to succeed in the workforce. Al-Ghazali insisted that women be well educated, especially in matters of religion; as the lessons and virtues of the *Quran* and Islam will prove beneficial to the social and political activities of the MB.¹⁶³

Al-Ghazali has been called a pioneer of Islamic feminism¹⁶⁴ and has been continually referred to as such, but in the absence of a threatening rule and government; al-Ghazali spent the remainder of her life relaying more of an Islamist agenda than that of an Islamic feminist. As many Muslim Sisters looked up to her as a leading figure, one must question whether the Muslim Sisters themselves seek equal rights for women and more representation in Egypt's parliament and government, or they are wholly dedicated to the MB's vision, even if it deters opportunities for women's advancement in Egypt's political and social participation. Islamic feminist or not, al-Ghazali remains, to many Islamic feminists as well as Islamist women, an idol. To Lewis, al-Ghazali's blend of "conservatism, nationalism, feminism and spirituality may be the guiding principle of many Islamist women today."¹⁶⁵ Fittingly, when al-Ghazali was asked what she would do if she came to power, she replied that under Islamic rule Muslim women "would retreat to their natural domain as nurturers of the nation's men."¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² Marcotte, 64.

¹⁶³ Cooke (1995), 152.

¹⁶⁴ Refer to Lewis.

¹⁶⁵ Lewis, 2.

¹⁶⁶ Ghada Talhami, *The Mobilization of Muslim Women in Egypt*. (Gainesville: University of Florida, 1996), 52.

In respect to gender studies and the assessment of female participation in political roles and as part of political parties, academics should beware of allowing normative theories and behaviors to take over the analysis of female political actors, assuming that when female politicians or MPs are involved, women's issues will be represented and defended. Still, here exists a very delicate and intricate relationship between descriptive and substantive representation of women in politics, where many interplaying factors and causes indirectly build the inroads that female political sectors may or may not chose to utilize. This research's focus on the Muslim Sisters and the female representatives i.e. a critical set of actors; will work towards untangling and better understanding women's roles in an Islamist movement and society. The choice of methodology and tools applied throughout any research directly affects the outcome. As such, the next chapter will explain the applied methods and will clarify the rationale behind these choices.

CHAPTER TWO

Methodology

The methodology of this paper is primarily qualitative in nature and depends on several practices including: discourse analysis¹⁶⁷ (e.g. journal articles, newspapers), content analysis (books, press releases, websites) and face-to-face interviews with four categories of subjects: politically active female MB members, non-politically active female MB members, politically active male MB members and non-politically active MB male members. In addition, political analysts and experts in the MB were interviewed, to gather information and predictions on the future of the MB in the post-Mubarak era (in particular, its newly formed party and its stance on female political participation).

Qualitative research was most suited for the topic at hand, as it assists in examining 'why and how' social action occurs in a certain time and place. This research assesses and critiques scholarly articles published in the field of Middle East politics, as well as the work of authors known to dominate the field of gender studies and/or activism within the Middle Eastern region. This dissertation is problem-driven;¹⁶⁸ it questions the state of female participation in the MB and aims to explain it through analyzing the challenges and drawbacks of the case study presented in the Muslim Sisters. Throughout this research endeavour, the

¹⁶⁷ Discourse analysis of texts and interviews during this research effort will not be conducted in its most literal sense, i.e. analysis of sources will not include an analysis of language or pictures or media used in the sources, and there will be no assessment of hidden meanings within those texts. Discourse analysis of sources, in the political sense, will include assessing the variables and actors in question - the MB organization and its relationship to, and impression of the Muslim Sisters - by connecting different theories that are political in nature.

¹⁶⁸ For a better explanation of problem driven research as opposed to theory-based research, refer to Timothy J. Ellis and Yair Levy, "Framework of Problem-Based Research: A Guide for Novice Researchers on the Development of a Research-Worthy Problem," *The International Journal of an Emerging Transdiscipline* 11, (2008): 17-33.

triangulation method is used to allow a complete picture and interpretation of the case study in its current political and social environment, through the compilation of different types of data sources. The use of this method is ideal in limiting nonconforming data and increasing the reliability of the research's results and conclusions, through uncovering the similarities and commonalities in the data collected.¹⁶⁹

The methodology used is primarily dependent on a bottom-up approach or inductive reasoning. As this thesis started with the idea that Muslim Sisters desire better representation and a sense of empowerment within the MB and the Egyptian state and society, this specific observation eventually expanded to include the broader picture of an Islamist movement and a patriarchal and traditional society and state. Inductive research at its very core is a more open-ended form of research that includes investigative and evolving characteristics. Its scientific approach involves exploring human nature and the perception of the actors being researched.¹⁷⁰ The bottom-up approach, of processing information from the surrounding world and the actors in question, is largely based on examining incoming data from the surrounding environment. Initially, a tentative hypothesis is stated, which may or may not be modified or developed depending on the existence of other relevant theories that may require "situating the inductively gained hypothesis within a larger theoretical framework."¹⁷¹ The case

¹⁶⁹ Veronica A. Thurmond, "The Point of Triangulation." *Journal Of Nursing Scholarship* 33, no. 3 (2001): 253.

¹⁷⁰ Adrienne Hertier, "Causal Explanation," in *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective*, edited by Donatella Della Porta and Michael Keating (Cambridge: The Cambridge Press, 2008), 64.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 65.

study in qualitative research could “confirm existing theories, infirm existing theoretic, or generate new hypothesis,”¹⁷² thereby establishing hypothesis and theory post-research effort.

The problem of trying to measure and understand the effects of religion and culture on the Muslim Sisters’ level of empowerment, in the midst of a traditional and patriarchal society, is quite difficult. This is why conducting a survey-based research, instead of face-to-face interviews, would have proven inefficient and ineffective. Survey may help understand a situation or a culture on an individual level, but it will falter when studying a group or a collective that has a common cultural and/or religious descriptor or set of descriptors.¹⁷³ At the same time, preconceived notions and cultural stereotypes may seep into the analysis portion of any qualitative research that includes interaction with the group or collective that is being researched; through activities of survey-taking or conducting interviews. For that reason, Porta and Keating encourage the application of a triangulation method in regards to inductive/bottom-up approaches that involved ethnographic tools and case studies.¹⁷⁴

The Components of the Triangulation Method

While several background sources allowed for a solid understanding of the inner-workings of the MB and their gender-related challenges, interviews were still needed to reveal “a deeper level of information in order to capture meaning,

¹⁷² Landman, 289.

¹⁷³ Donatella Della Porta and Michael Keating, eds. *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective*, (Cambridge: The Cambridge Press, 2008), 9.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

process and context,”¹⁷⁵ as Landman asserts. Translating meaning into intelligible words “involves describing and understanding people as conscious and social human beings.”¹⁷⁶ The face-to-face interviews significantly helped in completing this research effort and in filling in the gaps in primary and secondary texts.

Additionally, given that the January 25 revolution completely altered the political course of the MB and its members, interviews were needed to keep up with the lack of information that resulted from the rapid changes in Egypt’s political situation, especially with regards to the parliamentary and presidential elections. The 2011/12 elections occurred in the absence of the traditional overpowering government and ruling regime that Egypt has experienced in the past;¹⁷⁷ in this way, they differed from the elections that preceded them.

Secondary Sources

As mentioned before, the methodology of this research is wholly qualitative, and utilizes an inductive mode of processing information. Inductive processing of information includes identifying relevant theories throughout a research effort of collecting and compiling data.¹⁷⁸ This is different from a

¹⁷⁵Donatella Della Porta and Michael Keating, “How Many Approaches in the Social Sciences? An Epistemological Introduction,” in *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective*, edited by Donatella Della Porta and Michael Keating, (Cambridge: The Cambridge Press, 2008), 20.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Even though the 2011/12 elections were marred by vote-rigging and vote-buying allegations, much like the past election seasons; voters were not blocked from accessing polling stations, as was the practice during the Mubarak regime when MB supporters and members were barred from accessing many polling stations. See analysis Chapters Six and Seven.

¹⁷⁸ Herbert J. Rubin and Irene S. Rubin. *Qualitative interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE publications, 1995), 56.

quantitative and positivist method, where the theory and hypothesis need to be established before any research effort is taken.¹⁷⁹ Both content and discourse analysis of secondary texts and primary sources were applied throughout. Primary and secondary texts were analyzed and relied on in tracing the evolution of the feminist movement in Egypt, through both a secular and an Islamic lens, and in relation to the state, the MB party and the antagonistic relationship that exists between them. Texts, journals and books that detail the MB's history, events, ideologies and influences were examined. Newspapers and opinion articles were heavily relied upon when analyzing the January 25 revolution, the transitional period and the post-Mubarak elections.

A compilation of international and local Egyptian newspapers was depended on to minimize the chances of biased reporting. The Associated Press and Reuters were the main sources of information as both contain up-to-date reports and offer uninterrupted live newsfeeds. As for Arabic newspapers; independent newspapers were referred to, for the same purpose of minimizing authoritative attempts at restricting information. This same practice was applied when researching the history of feminist or women's movements, and the Muslim Sisters' activities in Egypt. Simultaneously, both subjects were thematically examined in light of their relationship with the ruling regime: the Sisters' non-electoral participation since the inception of the MB and the Sisters' electoral participation in Egypt's politics. Both premises reveal that the Muslim Sisters were publicly dependent on their male counterparts for the advancement and

¹⁷⁹ Porta and Keating, "How Many Approaches in the Social Sciences?" 15-20.

“growth of the organization. The Muslim Sisters proved indispensable to the organization at times when their participation, whether of a political or social nature, was a determinant of the MB’s future.

Interviews and Techniques Used

Interviews with MB members were needed to complete the assessment of the role of the Muslim Sisters in Egyptian society and politics. An ethnographic approach was used to better understand the social phenomenon of the Muslim Sisters within an Islamist movement from a micro-perspective. Ethnographic practices, essential for a long time, in the field of anthropology, have proven beneficial in the field of social sciences as well. As the actors being examined give meaning to their actions and life purposes, ethnographic practices such as interviewing actors minimize the creation of ill-researched assumptions that may overshadow the purpose of the research work. Bray highlights the importance of an ethnographic approach, especially in a bottom-up analysis, in that it is

“contextual, examining whole situations rather than breaking them down into discrete variables whose effects are separate. Theory is important for research, but it is not imposed on the situation and is developed in the course of the research.”¹⁸⁰

Moreover, the ethnographic approach complements the nature and direction of this research effort through three fundamental steps: the preliminary formulation of the research subject, followed by data-gathering; and ending with the analysis and writing of observed data. This naturalistic approach minimizes confusion or contradiction in theoretical explanations, where empirical data

¹⁸⁰ Porta and Keating, 14.

supersedes that of theoretical arguments. Interaction with the directed subjects or actors in a research effort reveals the number of players involved and the level of seen or unseen political and/or social power they may wield - which is unquantifiable. Ethnography and interviewing subjects reveal the many active levels of human social interaction and how those levels may affect and determine the creation or the destruction of present political social and economic relations.¹⁸¹ The application of process tracing of a subject's reasons for their behaviors and actions reveals the relationship between the actor's belief system and his/her behaviors. Vennesson explains that process tracing is crucial in conducting an effective empirical case study research, as it presents the researcher with a different outlet to learn the

“preferences and perceptions of actors, their purposes, their goals, their values and their specification of the situations that face them. Process tracing helps the researcher to uncover, directly and indirectly, what actors want, know and compute.”¹⁸²

The data-gathering portion of this research entailed one-time interviews due to time constraints posed by the time frame in which this research was conducted. The field research portion took place during the first few weeks of parliamentary sessions: the Legislative Assembly elections and the 2012 presidential campaigns. As a result, due to the busy schedule of the interviewees, the duration of the interviews ranged from 15 - 50 minutes, and follow-up interviews were highly difficult to schedule, thereby eliminating the

¹⁸¹ Zoe Bray, “Ethnographic Approaches,” in *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective*, edited by Donatella Della Porta and Michael Keating, (Cambridge: The Cambridge Press, 2008), 298.

¹⁸² Pascal Vennesson, “Case Studies and Process Training: Theories and Practices,” in *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective*, edited by Donatella Della Porta and Michael Keating, (Cambridge: The Cambridge Press, 2008), 233.

option of in-depth interviews. The interviews were 1) recorded 2) open-ended 3) semi-structured with a few defined questions that lead into a more conversational interview, and 4) Conducted mostly in Arabic, unless the interviewee was comfortable with communicating in English. In addition, participatory observation of the Muslim Sisters was not possible, as most workshops, seminars and meetings organized by the MB and FJP were closed to the public. However, a few rallies and protests were attended with non-MB individuals and groups for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of how protest movements, much like the 18 days of the revolution, assembled in Egypt.

Behavioralists in the field of political science depend on human interaction and observation of peoples' reaction to better explain political and social factors without passing superficial judgments. Also known as the ideology of positivism, behaviouralists acknowledge that by observing political events, actors and structures, political scientists can generate informed analytical statements.¹⁸³ In the case of the MB, for both its male and female members, the political climate after the 2011 revolution vastly differs from what they have grown accustomed to, i.e. the absence of an oppressive government and military regime. As result, the subjects participated more openly in interviews, but at the same time, they were more careful about their public image and the message it communicates about their political aspirations.¹⁸⁴ After gaining a parliamentary majority and fielding a

¹⁸³ Porta and Keating, xvii.

¹⁸⁴ During the field research portion, it was not difficult to contact MB members, as they were open to being interviewed about their activities, but they were careful to question the interviewer's background and affiliations for fear that the information they provided during the interview is leaked to media outlets and becomes exploited in an attempt to portray them in a negative light to the public.

presidential candidate, the MB has transformed into a public entity from whom transparency is now to be expected; in keeping with the demands of the revolution. In effect, most interviews that have been conducted with MB members in the past, whether male or female, were characterised by a very different behaviourists tactic. Before the revolution and in the presence of the constant threat of a police or military crackdown, most members who did not belong to the MB's senior echelon,¹⁸⁵ were hesitant to identify themselves, during interviews, with the banned organization, which resulted in a limited number of interviews characterised by hesitant tones or requests for anonymity.¹⁸⁶ Furthermore, female members of the MB did not identify themselves in correspondences with the MB, for fear of reprimand or harassment from the regime.¹⁸⁷ Conducting interviews post-revolution highlighted the shift and drastic changes in the MB's approachability and its newfound public place in Egypt's society and political sphere. About 31 individuals were interviewed; their affiliations were established using one or more of the following descriptions: their membership in either the MB, the FJP or both, their known loyalty or association with the MB; and their gender. Also, of the 31 people that were interviewed, MB experts and/or analysts were selected based on their academic or research specialization, and their

¹⁸⁵ Throughout the Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak regimes, the senior members of the MB were publicly known and identified in Egyptian society. With their growing popularity and political presence during Mubarak's reign, the senior members became more vocal, appearing on television and public events.

¹⁸⁶ During the researcher's interviews with the Muslim Sisters, it was casually mentioned a few times that such public association with the MB wouldn't have been possible during the Mubarak years due to their fear of arrests. Refer to the methodology chapter of Dede's thesis dissertation; Dede refers to MB members by their first name, and on occasion, by their profession.

¹⁸⁷ Interviewees were active female MB members who have retreated from the public eye in the past and who were hesitant to state their affiliations to the MB during Mubarak's rule. G.R. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 17, 2012, and H.A.M. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 24, 2012.

interactions and publications concerning the MB's activities and ideologies. After narrowing down the desired descriptions the interviewees should possess, the practice of snowball sampling was applied when deciding the number of individuals interviewed.¹⁸⁸ In the case of building up a contact list of interviewees, the practice of referrals provided more contacts, as the interviewer gained the trust of interviewees by mentioning the names of the interviewees preceding them.

Questions Asked During Interviews¹⁸⁹

Field research applied a combination of a topical oral history and a cultural mode of interviewing,¹⁹⁰ where the interviewer sought certain individuals who have experienced particular historical events, such as the January 25 revolution or Egypt's previous elections, in an attempt to reconstruct events and provide a more personal account. Cultural interviews provide an opportunity to ascertain the shared meaning and value that the MB members - as a group - develop. Topical interviews and cultural interviews differ greatly in how questions are posed by the interviewer. Topical interview questions are more specific; the interviewer is expected to direct the flow and manner of the conversation, whereas cultural interviews wholly depend on active listening.¹⁹¹ Initially,

¹⁸⁸ Snowball sampling occurs when the researcher builds up the list of contacts through gathering from their initial pool of interviews their personal contacts thereby accessing their personal and social networks. See Rowland Atkinson and John Flint, "Accessing Hidden and Hard-to-Reach Populations: Snowball Research Strategies," *Social Research Update, University of Surrey*, no. 33, (Summer 2001), accessed April 15, 2012, <http://sru.soc.surrey.ac.uk/SRU33.pdf>

¹⁸⁹ For a list of the general and specific questions asked refer to Appendix B.

¹⁹⁰ Rubin and Rubin, 29-31.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 29-31.

questions posed during the interviews were divided into two sections: direct descriptive questions and open-ended questions. In the case of interviewing male and female members of the MB, the interviews commenced with short questions about the interviewees' professions, affiliation (whether they are a member of the FJP and the MB simultaneously) and how long they have been members of the MB. These preliminary questions identified the interviewee's level of involvement and exposure to the MB as a mobilizing organization, thereby assessing the level of their knowledge of internal MB politics. Both newer and older members of the MB were interviewed to provide a comparison and contrast of their awareness of MB internal and external politics.

The second set of questions was tailored to relay the interviewees' thoughts on the reasons for the low female political representation within the MB and what possible solutions exist to encourage a stronger female presence in the MB and Egypt's Parliament.¹⁹² The questions posed provided an insight as to the importance of the concept of gender equality and female representation among the MB members before and after the revolution. The long-held belief that the MB male members were protecting the majority of the Muslim Sisters from harm or harassment by the military and the police was questioned during the interviews.¹⁹³ The same set of questions was posed to political analysts and MB experts. These set of questions were direct and targeted a certain timeframe or a specific incident, where the interviewer controlled the direction of the discussion

¹⁹² For statistics on female representation within the MB's party and Egypt's Parliament, refer to Reem Leila, "On their Own," *Al-Ahram Weekly*, no. 1073, 24 - 30 November 2011, accessed January 28, 2012, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2011/1073/fo112.htm>.

¹⁹³ Abdellatif and. Ottaway, 10 and Krahe.

to ensure that the interviewee did not go off topic, and at the same time, ensured that the interview provided a clearer picture of the interviewee's experiences and opinions.

However, as the interviews progressed, the interviewer had to adjust and tailor the questions in accordance with the interviewees' background and affiliation, to maximize the level of information derived from the interviews.¹⁹⁴ Since the interviews were used in this research as a supplementary tool and not as a source to gather statistical data, adapting the questions to the interviewees did not compromise the reliability of data. Furthermore, as fieldwork continued, new ideas and questions were formed during conversations and interviews with the subjects. The continual updating and reworking of the questions characterized this fieldwork with an iterative design where interviews were customized to ensure accuracy.¹⁹⁵ This approach was the most suited to conducting interviews with a group of people joined by a common identity and/or belief system that may be similar, but somewhat different from that of the author.¹⁹⁶

The third set of questions took on a more relaxed atmosphere as the interviewer asked more open-ended questions to assess the interviewees' sentiments regarding certain issues such as: the absence of female members in the senior hierarchy of the organization and whether the structure will change and evolve to better integrate the Muslim Sisters. The researcher tried to delve

¹⁹⁴ For more on flexible research designs, refer to Rubin and Rubin, 45, 92.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. 92.

¹⁹⁶ Saeeda Shah, "The Researcher/Interviewer in Intercultural Context: A Social Intruder!" *British Educational Research Journal* 30, no. 4 (2004): 552-556, accessed January 4, 2012, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1502176>

into the MB's changing opinions and attitudes regarding the issue of women occupying certain positions such as judges or the nation's president, through the use of the following phrases: freedom of press, freedom to form a political party, transparency and equality. By using these words, which the MB and FJP have been utilizing in press conferences,¹⁹⁷ the interviewer indirectly compared the current political climate to that of the Mubarak era. Moreover, the female interviewees were asked to discuss and describe their activities within the MB and the FJP, in regards to their everyday political activities and their political aspirations within the organization and its party.

Ethical Obligation

Some MB members were wary of the interviewer's intentions regarding the use of the information provided for other purposes besides academic research. As a result, some, mostly female members, requested a copy of the questions beforehand. Interviewees were first contacted via phone, where the interviewer introduced herself, and explained the topic of her research and her academic affiliations, to which most of the interviewees responded positively. Before the beginning of each interview, the interviewer explained once again her research topic and presented the interviewees with an ethics consent form, which included the interviewer's contact details and a confidentiality clause. Prior to each interview, it was made clear that a recording device was to be used during

¹⁹⁷ See press releases published on their official websites: www.ikhwanweb.com and www.fjponline.com

the interview. Also, interviewees were given the option of opting out on recording their interviews.

Challenges Faced: Bias and Limitations

The 'interviewer effect', in which the responses of the subject are influenced by the characteristics or behaviours of the interviewer, is an ever-present issue to be considered in any type of research, whether qualitative or quantitative.¹⁹⁸ In the latter, there are statistical techniques to minimize and estimate the magnitude of bias. In qualitative research, however, some bias will always exist, and will be difficult to measure. Typical measures to reduce bias include ensuring consistency in questions, structure and tone.

The situation in this research was potentially more problematic, and needed to be considered carefully. In particular, an important task was to determine the nature and extent of any bias introduced by the personal perceptions and belief system of the author of this research work. As an Egyptian Muslim female, the interviewer and author related to the interview subjects on three levels: being Egyptian, being a woman, and defining herself as a Muslim. Despite the fact that the author would describe herself as a Muslim feminist, as opposed to the subjects to be interviewed (who would best be described as Islamic feminists or Islamists), the research and the questions posed during the interviews were based and established on her preconceived cultural and religious

¹⁹⁸ Refer to Herbert Stember and Herbert Hyman. "Interviewer Effects in the Classification of Responses," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (Winter, 1949-1950): 669-682, accessed January 14, 2012, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2745873>

notions of Egyptian Muslim women in the public sphere via electoral activities, as opposed to the more traditional role of Muslim women as wives and mothers in the private sphere. Specifically, the interviewer's gender could very well have had an effect on the behaviour and response of the interviewees.¹⁹⁹ Nevertheless, interviews conducted in a 'similarity-based' environment yield great benefit for the research effort as it presents "shared assumptions about the nature of reality resulting from known behaviour patterns and shared values, which facilitate understanding".²⁰⁰ Another obstacle to the success of the interview process and this research is that the term 'feminism' is not positively received by the Muslim Sisters, who as discussed in the previous chapter, did not look fondly upon such a 'Western concept'. Despite the fact that Egypt's history has seen its own brand of feminism with a purely Arab identity,²⁰¹ most Islamist and traditional factions still associate that term with Western imperialism and Western ideologies.

The Interviewer's Advantages

The interviewer's close relations and understanding of such a patriarchal culture helped bridge the gap between Western and modern Islamic thought regarding today's societal and political perspective of the growing trend of a gender-friendly Islamic voice. The author was brought up in a Muslim Egyptian

¹⁹⁹ See Huddy, Leonie et al. "The Effect of Interviewer Gender on the Survey Response," *Political Behavior* 19, no. 3 (September 1997): 197-220, accessed January 4, 2012, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/586516>

²⁰⁰ Shah, 553.

²⁰¹ For more on the roots of Arab feminist's movements, refer to Chapter Three - Historical Background, and the activities of Huda Sha'rawi and Malak Hifni Nasif; as well as Beth Baron, *Egypt as a Woman: Nationalism, Gender, and Politics* (Berkeley: University Of California Press, 2005).

family, and as a result, the frame of her ideals and interpretation can be described as possessing an Islamic and Egyptian culture overtone. Karam experienced the same societal effects on her research when she interviewed Egyptian Muslim subjects. She states:

“My quest as a woman for ‘freedom’ had to be grounded within certain norms and values – supposedly Islamic – which predetermined my subjectivity even before I had ventured to discover it by myself. It was as if questions of my identity were determined for me by others, namely family and legislature, both of which functioned within a discourse that claimed moral, religious and patriarchal superiority, derived legitimacy from a myriad of ‘Islamic’ interpretations of societal norms and values.”²⁰²

In addition, the author’s daily use of the Egyptian colloquial language facilitated her understanding of the interviewees’ references and cultural sayings. The author’s already existing network of friends and family in Cairo, helped bridge trust issues that were bound to arise when contacting members of the MB. The commonality that existed between the author/interviewer and the people she interviewed, inevitably resulted in applying the practice of self-reflexivity, where the interviewer tailored her questions and approach in accordance to the people she set out to interview.²⁰³

Despite the valuable information that the interviews and content analysis have produced to strengthen the analysis portion of this dissertation, a historical background chapter is needed to fill in information gaps that may occur during the analysis of the MB’s growth as an organization and political entity. The historical background chapter precedes the analysis of the Muslim Sisters, to

²⁰² Karam, 34.

²⁰³ Tim May, *Social Research Issues, Methods And Process*, 3rd Edition (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1993), 144.

which the triangulation method is implemented. Egypt's 20th century is filled with historical events and incidents that demonstrate the relationship between feminist entities and the state, as well as the state and the MB. Such revealing information may provide insights into the possible scenarios that may play out again in post-revolution Egypt.

CHAPTER THREE

Historical Background

The majority of large states in the Middle East have witnessed an impressive array of political enlightenment and turmoil during their modern history. Like most great movements in world history, feminism and Islamism were a response to insufferable authority. In this case, both forces took to Egyptian streets in defiance of British occupation and lingering colonial sentiments in the early 1900s. An Egyptian lawyer and jurist by the name of Qasim Amin, who was also a disciple of Mohamed Abduh,²⁰⁴ devoted two books to the issue of women's liberation, *Tahrir al-Mar'a* (the Emancipation of Women, 1899) and *al Mar'a al Jadida* (the New Woman, 1900). Amin was greatly influenced by Western feminist thought and contemporary Islamic thinkers who encouraged women's emancipation in order to save the Egyptian society from plunging into the dark ages. He sought to modernize Egyptian society by improving the status of its female population. Publications such as these gave enough momentum for Egyptian female activists like Hoda Shaarawi and Malak Hifni Nasif to stand up and make themselves heard, and to battle for a more equal representation. In defiance of foreign rule, Hoda Shaarawi and other prominent figures' wives and sisters took to the street in protest, as Shaarawi took off her veil as a sign of liberation from old rule, and a promise of new beginnings for women and for Egypt.²⁰⁵ In 1923, the EFU was established, which was considered to be the first

²⁰⁴ Mohamed Abduh is considered by many Islamic scholars as the founder of Islamic Modernism. His liberal reformist ideologies have influenced many religious scholars and reformists like Qasim Amin.

²⁰⁵Talhami, 13.

female organization that catered to female empowerment in Egypt's social and political arenas.²⁰⁶ This organization, also, represented a point of departure for al-Ghazali as well.

Five years after the establishment of the EFU, a schoolteacher by the name of Hasan al-Banna formed the MB, initially known as the 'Society of Muslim Brothers' in 1928. The MB grew into a formidable organization in little time as a response to both the Westernization and deterioration of the Egyptian society, as al-Banna viewed it. Al-Banna believed that a return to the true and pure principles of Islam would save Egypt as a whole from permanently falling into the snares of British influence and rule. He believed that the cleansing and purification of the society should start on the individual level, from the bottom up, and for that, he preached the return to the Islamic way of life, as experienced by the Prophet Mohamed and his rightly-guided Caliphs.²⁰⁷ Al-Banna's ideology and actions changed in the course of the overthrow of British occupation, as a result of his troubled relationship with his followers and with King Farouk's rule.²⁰⁸ Al-Banna's evolving views can be seen as a reflection and a close representation of today's MB, who continued, on more than one occasion, to change their tactics to suit the existing ruling force and appease the majority of the Egyptian

²⁰⁶ Lewis.

²⁰⁷ Dennis J. Sullivan and Sana Abed-Kotob, *Islam in Contemporary Egypt* (Boulder: Lynne-Rienner Publishers, 1999), 41-42.

²⁰⁸ Following the assassination of Prime Minister al-Nuqrashi, al-Banna reviewed his plans and aspirations for the MB movement, and sought to ask for their mercy, in an attempt to right the wrongs made by the MB's militant branch – al-Nizam al-Khass. In addition, al-Banna reassessed his views on elections, when he decided to participate in elections after he had previously viewed them as a tool of fragmentation of a nation, as it went against the principles of *bay'a* (overwhelming support) by the Egyptian people.

population.²⁰⁹ During al-Banna's life, as the father of the movement, he went from leading a purely social movement at the first day of its inception, to a highly politicized one, with its activities ranging from grassroots efforts, such as spreading the Islamic truth and educating the masses, to a force that resorted to violent interactions with those in power, whether British or Egyptian loyalists. Eventually, his lack of consistence with regards to his ideologies and actions with his peers resulted in the branching off of some of the Brothers, who formed the violent and militant branch; the Islamic jihad, and ultimately led to his demise.²¹⁰

In regards to the EFU and the MB, the ruling regime or the forces in charge, fully utilized them at several points in Egypt's volatile years of ridding itself of foreign occupation and influence. Despite the fact that the women's movement and the MB movement appear to be conflicting in several facets, they are, in fact, opposite sides of the same coin. This chapter will highlight several historical moments, in both movements, which have taken place in the period between the British occupation and the Mubarak regime.

This first section of this chapter gives an insight into Egypt's history with feminism and women's movements from its inception as an idea and vision in the eyes of a few Egyptian women to today's infamous active Arab feminist - Nawal al-Saadawi.²¹¹ The aforementioned women's volatile relationship with the

²⁰⁹ Mona el-Ghobashy, "The Metamorphosis Of The Egyptian Muslim Brothers," 391.

²¹⁰ Alison Pargeter, *The Muslim Brotherhood: The Burden of Tradition*. (London: Saqi Books, 2010), 29-30.

²¹¹ Nawal al-Saadawi has been described within the feminist community and the Arab world, as a radical veteran feminist with an outspoken aversion to Islamic political ideologies and the practice of FGM. She has been imprisoned by the Egyptian government and subjected to harsh criticisms from the Islamic community, where Islamists have tried to force her husband to divorce her, as she was branded a heretic and Muslims should not be married to heretics. See Sherifa Zuhur "Egypt: Security, Political, and Islamist Challenges," *Strategic Studies Institute* (September 2007),

government or ruling regime will be highlighted throughout. The second section will explain that these women had very different ideas of feminism and women's emancipation, where their ideas were driven from either a purely Western concept, to one with an Arab influence entrenched in feminist ideals, or to a movement with an Islamic undertone. Moreover, the MB's negative and violent relationship with the regime throughout the years will be discussed as well. The ruling government's relationship with women's movements and Islamist movements is important to focus on, as it was a defining factor in both movements' successes and/or failures.²¹² The last section will show how both ideologies converged when it came to al-Ghazali. Al-Ghazali was not the only woman to fight for both the Islamist and feminist movements, but she is the only one to brand herself publicly as an *Ikhwanji*²¹³ and has fought to spread their message of 'Islam is the solution'. Moreover, al-Ghazali, managed to change the status quo of women in the MB, i.e. the Muslim Sisters were known to exist but rarely publicly associated themselves with the MB.²¹⁴ She had both an Islamist and feminist agenda, and acted on strengthening both ideologies as a way of life. She was the first publicly active Muslim Sister - both socially and politically - during the Nasser years; when most MB male members were jailed. During that time, her actions were pivotal in keeping the MB as a political movement alive, until she was imprisoned during the Nasser era.²¹⁵

71.

²¹² For a more detailed depiction of this complex relationship refer to Chapter Three for a historical overview of Islamist and women's movements.

²¹³ A colloquial term usually given to a Muslim Brotherhood member or loyalist.

²¹⁴ Omayma Abdel-Latif, "In the Shadow of the Brothers: The Women of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood," *Carnegie Papers* 13 (October 2008): 1-22.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 4 and Lewis, 24-25.

The Birth of Female Empowerment in Egypt

One could argue that the moment that forever changed the future of Egyptian women is owed to Khedive Ismail's wife's decision to open the first all-girls school for female youth in 1873.²¹⁶ The one incident that challenged the divide that existed between men and women for centuries in the Egyptian society, however, was Shaarawi's defiance of the status quo; in the act of taking off her face veil.²¹⁷

The Era of British Opposition in Egypt

Hoda Shaarawi shared more than a common incident with Safiyya Zaghlul. She, too, was married to a prominent figure of the Egyptian upper class, who was also a member of the Wafd Party. One could argue that their husbands' social and political placement was what fuelled them to take the political stances they did. For without their husbands' strong footing in Egypt's public sphere, Egypt's feminist history would not have been the same.²¹⁸ Shaarawi and other women activists stood side by side with male activists, united by their desire to live in a free Egypt, ruled and governed by its people. Sharifah Hanim Riad, the wife of Mahmoud Riad Pasha, ran the first women's committee of the Wafd Party.²¹⁹ As one of its members, Shaarawi "entered the house of the British high

²¹⁶ Khedive Ismail, the viceroy or governor of Egypt and Sudan from 1863-1879, was considered a reformer and one of the first men to seek emancipation for women alongside Qasim Amin. However, his third wife, Jashem Afet Hanem is the one responsible for opening the first all-girls state school in 1873. Refer to Talhami, 24 and Elizabeth Isichei, *Histories of North African Societies*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 282.

²¹⁷ Talhami, 13.

²¹⁸ Baron, 34.

²¹⁹ Mahmoud Riad was an Egyptian statesman, who served as Prime Minister three times during his political career.

commissioner to present their nationalist demands on November 13, 1919.”²²⁰ Armed with the support and approval of their husbands, the Women’s Wafd held all-women’s demonstrations with the most memorable of them taking place on March 20, 1919 and January 16, 1920.²²¹ But as the 1919 revolution started and ended, the women realized that their aim of gaining suffrage was side-lined to make space for the men’s agenda.²²²

Shaarawi and the EFU

Disconcerted with being marginalized by issues that concerned a purely nationalist agenda, Shaarawi formed the EFU, and, thus, the Western concept of feminism was introduced into a Middle Eastern nationalist movement.²²³ At the time, Shaarawi was still a member of the Wafd Party and was strongly involved in their nationalist activities. It was in 1924, when Shaarawi attended the International Conference on Women in Rome, that she returned to her homeland and shed her veil and declared that her feminist identity supersedes her nationalist one.²²⁴ Along with the formation of the EFU and the Women’s Wafd, women from the middle and upper classes formed a variety of organizations in the 1920s, including the Society for Egyptian Ladies’ Awakening and Mothers of the Future.²²⁵ Shaarawi soon left the Women’s Wafd Committee, when she realized without a doubt that the Wafd’s vision did not align with her vision for the

²²⁰ Talhami, 10.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Women did not gain the right to vote till 1956.

²²³ Thomas Philip, “Feminism and Nationalist Politics in Egypt,” in *Women in the Muslim World*, eds. Lois Beck and Nikki Reddie (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 290.

²²⁴ Talhami, 10 and Earl L. Sullivan, *Women in Egyptian Public Life* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 22.

²²⁵ Baron, 54.

EFU; a vision that focused on women's political rights, namely the right to vote and "[qualifying] for parliamentary representation".²²⁶

Despite her activism through the EFU, the focus of her life's work remained within the social realm of women's welfare, education, health, childrearing, family law and divorce rights. It was a natural place, for such a young movement and ideology, to start in a country that was still at its early stages. As an activist, she had two major accomplishments: ensuring the women's right to enrol in universities and raising the age of marriage for both men and women. Shaarawi was viewed as the rising star of women's rights and Arab feminism, and this did not go without official acknowledgment as she was honoured by the heads of four Arab governments.²²⁷ She also became the president of the EFU and vice-president of the International Women's Union, took part in numerous international women's gatherings as a spokeswoman for Egyptian women and founded fifteen more women's organizations. She also conquered the scholarly field by establishing a French language journal and an Arabic journal entitled 'The Egyptian Woman'.²²⁸

Shaarawi was not the only female activist to rise above the masses in her feminist fervour and drive to create a society of equality and justice. Both Malak Hefni Nasif and Nabawiyya Musa²²⁹ took part in the women's movement during the same time as Shaarawi. During the 1919 revolution, they joined their efforts

²²⁶ Talhami, 11.

²²⁷ Ibid., 12.

²²⁸ Margot Badran, "Competing Agenda: Feminism, Islam and the State in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Egypt," in *Women, Islam and the State*, ed. Deniz Kandiyoti (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 210.

²²⁹ Nasif was an activist and writer who was known as Bahithat al Badiya (Searcher in the Desert), Musa was an educator who fought her parents and the Ministry of Education for her right to sit her secondary school exams. Refer to Baron 27, 38, 87-88 and T. Philip, 283-287.

with that of the Wafd Party, to bring an end to the British occupation. In the end, all feminist ideologies were suppressed by concerns of “independence and emancipation from the British.”²³⁰

Doria Shafik: The New Generation of Egyptian Feminists

The generation that followed that of Shaarawi, Nasif and Musa was Doria Shafik's; a woman considered as Shaarawi's disciple and student. It was Shaarawi who took Shafik under her wing, supported her studies at Sorbonne University in France²³¹ and ultimately inspired her to continue the fight for gender equality in Egypt. After her return from France, and following Shaarawi's death, Shafik founded the Union of the Daughter of the Nile (*Ittihad Bint il Nil*) in 1948.²³² In solidarity with the EFU after its dissolution, Shafik declared its main mission of gaining women's political rights as *Bint il Nil's* chief objective,²³³ alongside female literacy. As a result, Shafik continued writing feminist articles and arguing for the importance of women's rights through the many facets of national media.²³⁴ Shafik was adamant about carrying on the legacy of the EFU, only through bigger and more effective means. Her organization was described as a “socially and geographically broader organization than its predecessor”.²³⁵ Also, just like its predecessor, the Union of the Daughter of the Nile, focused on the nationalist struggle that swept the country by training its members in the

²³⁰ Sherine Hafez, *An Islam of Her Own: Reconsidering Religion and Secularism in Women's Islamic Movements* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 64.

²³¹ Roded, 226.

²³² Sherifa Zuhur, *Revealing Reveiling: Islamist Gender Ideology in Contemporary Egypt* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992), 48.

²³³ Roded, 227.

²³⁴ Roded (2008) Baron (2005) Hafez (2011).

²³⁵ Roded, 227.

effective ways to participate in the nationalist movement through paramilitary training.²³⁶

Doria Shafik is most remembered for her extreme political activism as one of the first few women to defy the existing governing power. In the critical years leading up to the 1952 revolution, Shafik along with 1,000 women flooded the parliamentary building to demand the right to vote and run in elections.²³⁷ As mentioned before, the revolution did not bring about the rights that the women organizations were hoping for. With the success of the Free Officers revolution in 1952, came a new wave of socialist rule. However, the way Nasser's regime operated in regards to other political parties greatly resembled an unbending authoritarian rule. Nasser ordered the shutting down of all parties (except for that of the MB at the time). Organizations were targeted next, as they closed down the offices of the EFU, and the Union of the Daughters of the Nile, under the guise that these organizations had a strong political agenda, branding them as a political party.²³⁸ Unsurprisingly, this did not bring an end to Shafik's intense actions. To this day, she is known as the woman who took the Parliament building by storm, alongside one thousand women, to demand equal representation and rights in the Egyptian Constitution, and to stand amongst the men of the Egyptian Parliament. Further, her militant ideology inspired her to head a hunger strike on March 12, 1954, surrounded by her supporters, as she "threatened to starve herself to death if the government did not grant women the

²³⁶ Roded, 227.

²³⁷ Cynthia Nelson, "Biography and Women's History: On Interpreting Doria Shafik," in *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender*, eds. Nikki Keddie and Beth Baron (New York: Yale University Press, 1991), 320.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 324.

vote.” Mohamed Naguib ²³⁹ responded by giving her his word to seriously consider and evaluate her petition for the inclusion of women’s political rights in the Egyptian Constitution.²⁴⁰

It was, two years later, with the new constitution of 1956, that women were finally granted their political rights ²⁴¹ “despite an Islamic legal judgment (fatwa) by one of the chief religious authorities in Egypt.”²⁴² In addition, the constitutions of 1956 and 1963 declared all Egyptians equal and forbade discrimination on the basis of gender. ²⁴³ Despite those political gains, Shafik continued with her fight to guarantee a better life for the future generations of Egyptian women through the attainment of equal rights. As a result, she continued to question Nasser’s regime, leading to her house arrest in 1957, where she remained in seclusion until her death in 1975.²⁴⁴

Female Activism during the Nasser Period

The tension in Shafik’s and Nasser’s relationship was not, as a matter of fact, an accurate reflection of how Nasser and his socialist party viewed feminist politics. Nasser actually believed that the power and influence, growing in these

²³⁹ Mohamed Naguib was a member of the Free Officers and served as Egypt’s first president for eight months before Nasser took over that role.

²⁴⁰ Mervat Hatem, “The Pitfalls of the Nationalist Discourses on Gender in Egypt,” in *Gender and Citizenship in the Middle East*, ed. Suad Joseph (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 46.

²⁴¹ The 1956 constitution included women suffrage, gender equality in employment and wages and compulsory education for the first six years of schooling. Refer to Zuhur, *Revealing Reveiling*, 48-49.

²⁴² Roded, 227.

²⁴³ Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 97.

²⁴⁴ Nelson, 311.

organizations, needed to be harnessed and modelled after the socialist agenda, to further the socialist transformation of Egyptian society.²⁴⁵ In 1962, women gained membership in the Arab Socialist Union “at the level of popular committees, housing committees and committees reporting on women’s activities to the governor of Cairo.”²⁴⁶ Furthermore, female membership was allotted five percent of the total membership of the national party.²⁴⁷ In other words, two seats in each committee were reserved for women, not to mention, reserved seats in each provincial assembly.²⁴⁸

The socialist experiment to include female representation in the nation’s political units took place well before the formation of the Arab Socialist Union (ASU). Women started to contest seats in Parliament as early as 1957, when two women were elected.²⁴⁹ In the election that was described as the “first election since the female franchise,”²⁵⁰ women’s turnout was less than adequate. 144,983 women registered as opposed to 5,575,692 men. The number of women elected rose slightly until the 1969 session, when it dropped to three women only.²⁵¹

Female Activism During the Sadat Period

With the Sadat regime (1970 - 1981), one specific dramatic change has been seen, by some, as a blemish in the strong history of female empowerment

²⁴⁵ The Nasser regime appointed women for the first time to a number of significant posts.

²⁴⁶ Talhami, 20.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Soha Abdel Kader, *Egyptian Women in a Changing Society: 1899-1987* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1987), 114.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

in Egypt: 'Jihan's law'. The law, introduced by former first lady, Jihan al-Sadat, placed a quota of reserved seats for women in Parliament as part "of a package of laws for improving the status of women."²⁵² Predictably, this action did not appeal to either the Islamists or the members of other opposition movements, and the law was soon declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Constitutional Court.²⁵³ Since then, women's representation has declined in both *Majlas al-Shaab* (People's Assembly) and *Maljis al Shura* (Legislative Assembly/Shura Council). In 1990, only fifteen women held seats out of six hundred parliamentarians.²⁵⁴

However, not many setbacks were experienced during Sadat's reign by the feminist movement. On the contrary, a doctor by the name of Nawal al-Saadawi managed to shock the conservative Egyptian society by bringing up the topic of women and sex in her university lectures and books.²⁵⁵ Despite the unpopularity that al-Saadawi expectedly attained, she succeeded in forming and registering her organization – the Arab Women's Solidarity Association – in 1985.²⁵⁶ To many academics in the field of feminist and gender studies, al-Saadawi represented the second wave of feminist ideology in Egypt.²⁵⁷ Her

²⁵² Gamal Abdel Nasser, "Egypt: Succession Politics," in *Arab Elites: Negotiating the Politics of Change*, ed. Volker Perthes (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2004), 127.

²⁵³ Abdel Nasser, 127.

²⁵⁴ Talhami, 21.

²⁵⁵ Al-Saadawi's studies and publications focused on how women can be oppressed and silenced through the use of sexual abuse and violence. She also shed light on the criminal practice of female genital mutilation.

²⁵⁶ Sherifa Zuhur, "The Mixed Impact of Feminist Struggles in Egypt During the 1990s" *Meria Journal* 5, no.1 (March 2001).

²⁵⁷ First-wave feminism refers to movements that called for gender equality, voting and property rights. Second wave feminism widened its issues of concern by including the issues of women's sexuality and reproductive rights. Al-Saadawi's work is considered fundamental to Egypt's second wave of feminism as she focused on issues of sexuality and female genital mutilation. Refer to

organization is the first independent entity created for the purpose of women's advancement and equality in Egyptian society, after Nasser's regime circumscribed and limited all women's activities - both political and social in nature - to conform to the needs of the state.²⁵⁸

Several Women – Different Voices

Despite the vibrant history of the fight for gender equality in Egypt, women activists were actually motivated by different ideologies and they envisioned different futures for Egyptian women. Academics such as Badran (1995), Nelson (1991) and Baron (2005)²⁵⁹ have paid attention to activists' upbringing, education and experience in an attempt to delineate the triggers and influences for each activist. Even though both Shaarawi and Shafik were described as 'militant feminists' with a strong Western influence, they maintained completely different ideologies. Shaarawi saw herself as a Muslim reformist first and foremost, who sought to improve women's lives through a 'rethought Islam'; where she could never be accused of betraying her national heritage and history

Margot Badran, "Foreign Bodies: Engendering Them and Us," in *The Concept of the Foreign: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, ed. Rebecca Saunders (Lanham: Lexington books, 2003), 107-108.

²⁵⁸ In 1953, the Free Officer's government closed down the offices of the Egyptian Feminist Union and the Union of the Daughters of the Nile, claiming that they were political parties. Refer to Talhami, 18.

²⁵⁹ Margot Badran, Cynthia Nelson and Beth Baron have written extensively about Egypt's feminist movements during the 20th century. Baron discusses the feminising of the nationalist movement and the struggle for gender equality and equal footing during British occupation in Egypt in the early 20th century. Badran discusses the arrival and timelines of both Arab feminism and Islamic feminism and how they opposed each other but worked in parallel to one another towards a common goal. Nelson documents Doria Shafik's political and social movement as well as her upbringing and social background and how she differed from other female activists during that time.

of resisting British imperialism.²⁶⁰ Shaarawi represented the all-Egyptian woman who “demands with her loudest voice to be restored her political rights, rights granted to her by *sharia* and dictated to her by the demands of the present.”²⁶¹ Feminist activist Malak Hefni Nasif was also viewed as an “authentically Egyptian activist”, more so than Shaarawi who depended on Western feminist literature to a certain degree.²⁶² At the same time, Shaarawi created a separate fate for her and her followers - apart from that of the Islamist feminists - when she discarded her veil, defining the point of divergence for both factions.

Doria Shafik, on the other hand, was driven by her Western education. She focused on ridding the Egyptian society of backward practices such as the veil, by targeting that piece of cloth, and everything that represented patriarchal Middle Eastern culture and/or religious actions, in most of her rhetoric and publications.²⁶³ Nevertheless, her tireless activism was recognized and applauded worldwide, as she received calls from more than fifty Arab and Western nations and several world women’s organizations as well as from individuals supporting her actions.²⁶⁴ Inji Aflatun was yet another activist who reflected a Western education, as she believed and defended the “Marxist argument that [the] socioeconomic class system underlying the oppression of women had to be changed”.²⁶⁵ She was one of the founders of the *Lajnaat Al Shaabat* (Committee of Young Women), which was established to house those

²⁶⁰ Margot Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation: Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), 3

²⁶¹ Roded, 227.

²⁶² Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 169-88.

²⁶³ Zuhur (1992), 48-49.

²⁶⁴ Nelson, 325.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 315.

who have looked for another entity to replace the EFU, and who were actively pro-communist.²⁶⁶

As the last section of this chapter will reveal, religious rhetoric alongside female activism was common during these turbulent times in Egypt's political arena. The Islamist focus of activists like Zaynab al-Ghazali and Labiba Ahmed was thoroughly documented, but only a slight mention of Coptic women's organization is evident. Baron discovered a second set of Arabic women's monthlies. Malaka Saad's *al-Jins al-Latif* (The Gentle Sex, 1908-25) and Balsam Abd al-Malik's *al-Mar'a al-Misriyya* (The Egyptian Woman, 1920-39) - were among the publications that advocated a secular Egyptian nation.²⁶⁷ It is important to note, however, that despite the vast difference in rhetoric, Islamist activist Ahmed and feminist Shaarawi built their movements with a focus on traditional female areas of responsibility such as the provision "of social welfare services and activities like health care, literacy classes, arts and crafts, and vocational studies."²⁶⁸

Women were included as part of the overall socialist program under Nasser's regime. As for Sadat's regime, with him accommodating the Islamist movements in a tactic to marginalize leftist and liberalist political strands, a new breed of Islamist women infiltrated the Egyptian society at its grassroots;

²⁶⁶ Nadjé Al-Ali, *Secularism, Gender and the State in the Middle East: The Egyptian Women's movement*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 65-66.

²⁶⁷ Baron, 56.

²⁶⁸ Hafez, 70.

changing the new generation's mind-sets in regards to a woman's place in a modern Islamic society.²⁶⁹

The Muslim Brotherhood: The Oldest Islamist Movement

Islamist politics has been a driving force and overwhelming presence in Egypt since the 1980s.²⁷⁰ Islamism and the political rhetoric that accompanies it, have represented, to Arab Muslims in Egypt and elsewhere, another alternative to the secular Western way of life. Seeing that the MB as an organization has endured repressive regimes for over eighty years, it could be said that today's Islamist political movements and organizations that have spread throughout the Muslim world and even Europe, looked at the MB's experiences and lessons learned for ways to endure and ensure the continuance of their message.²⁷¹

The Muslim Brotherhood of today's Egypt is completely different from the one founded by its leader al-Banna.²⁷² The MB organization, which survived and endured four different government rules, while being forced to work underground as a banned organization, is testament to the strength of the Islamist phenomenon. Its survival sheds light on the complex and strong bond the Egyptian people have with their religion. Egyptians – both Muslims and

²⁶⁹ Lisa Blaydes and Safinaz el-Tarouty, "Women's Electoral Participation in Egypt: The Implications of Gender for Voter Recruitment and Mobilization," *The Middle East Journal* 63 no. 3 (Summer 2009): 366, DOI: 10.3751/63.3.11.

²⁷⁰ The violent Egyptian Islamist groups, which broke off from the MB, politicized their ideologies and message with the assassination of Sadat, and the MB decided to participate in parliamentary and professional syndicate elections since 1984.

²⁷¹ Ana Belén Soage. "Yusuf al-Qaradawi," in *The Muslim Brotherhood: The Organization And Policies Of A Global Islamist Movement*, ed. Barry Rubin (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 27-29.

²⁷² Refer to el-Ghobashy, "The Metamorphosis Of The Egyptian Muslim Brothers."

Christians – are irrevocably tied to their faith, as it is an integral part of their identity and, inevitably, their culture.²⁷³ Also, it would be difficult to divorce the MB from the ideology of nationalism, as it was prominent in all its activities during the first thirty years of its inception and, currently, in the post-January 25 era.²⁷⁴

Hasan al-Banna and the Creation of the MB

Education is a main pillar in restructuring or transforming an ailing government and rule.²⁷⁵ It is usually the target of politicians, activists and leading personalities when trying to rebuild a nation from the bottom up.²⁷⁶ At a time when British rule and way of life seemed to take hold of the Egyptian society, especially the middle to upper classes, a school teacher felt the urgency to reform his country and its people; by returning to the fold of Islam and its guiding principles - the *Quran* and *sharia*. Hasan al-Banna was a twenty-two year old teacher - part of the school state system in Ismaliyya. Al-Banna, like many others his age, lived with colonial rule and suffered the feelings of discontentment and oppression of having no say in political decisions affecting the country.²⁷⁷ Al-Banna believed that the alienation of the Egyptian people from their true faith –

²⁷³ Also, surveys conducted in recent months reveal that an overwhelming majority of Egyptians identify themselves first and foremost as Muslim. See Dalia Mogahed, "What Egyptian Women (and Men) Want" *Gallup Center*. (March 10, 2011). Accessed March 15, 2011, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/03/10/what_egyptian_women_and_men_want?page=full

²⁷⁴ Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 40-43.

²⁷⁵ Refer to Robert Lee's hypothesis of religion promoting political development through his assessment of British invasion and rule in the Middle East, in the late nineteenth century, 58-59 and 108-112.

²⁷⁶ In the case of Egypt, the Sadat and Mubarak regimes systematically curtailed the MB's influence in the field of education by offering free education that was not reliant on Islamic rhetoric or an Islamic framework. Refer to Al-Awadi (2004), 30-48 and 76-110.

²⁷⁷ Ana Belén Soage and J. F. Franganillo, "The Muslim Brothers In Egypt," in *The Muslim Brotherhood: The Organization And Policies Of A Global Islamist Movement*, ed. Barry Rubin (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 40.

Islam – was a contributing reason for the persistence of British colonialism.²⁷⁸ He called for Muslims to return to the all-encompassing religion of Islam to rectify the harm imposed on them by Western political and monetary interests.²⁷⁹

The Muslim Brotherhood was founded with an Islamic committee that al-Banna said would encompass “a Salafi mission, a Sunni methodology, a Sufi reality, a political committee, an athletic association, an academic and cultural association, an economic corporation and a social concept.”²⁸⁰ Al-Banna’s convictions were based on a complete reliance on Islam, so that it became

“a way of life as it involved all affairs of life... the starting point was the moral realm. The realization of Islamic principles requires strong morals, and all these efforts must be accompanied with a clear Islamic methodology (*minhaj*). If applied properly, the Islamic methodology is capable of healing all the ills of the society.”²⁸¹

Today, the MB is recognized and commended for its strong organizational skills that grew from the grassroots level, in all provinces and districts in Egypt, and its provision of services for the poor masses; services that the corrupt governments failed to deliver.²⁸² Having stated that, the Brotherhood still suffers from internal divisions and cracks amongst its authority channels and its different generations.²⁸³ The presence of divisions in ideologies in the MB’s organization is not a new phenomenon. During al-Banna’s brief life, there were many rifts and

²⁷⁸ Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 42.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 41.

²⁸⁰ Diaa Rashwan, “Political Islamist Movements: The Case of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt,” in *Islam and Politics Renewal and Resistance in the Muslim World*, eds. Amit Pandya and Ellen Laipson (Washington D.C.: The Henry L. Stimson Center, 2009), 14.

²⁸¹ Dede, 224.

²⁸² Sameh Naguib, “The Muslim Brotherhood: Contradictions and Transformations,” in “Political and Social Protest in Egypt,” ed. Nicholas Hopkins, *Cairo Papers in Social Science* 29, no. 2/3 (Summer/Fall 2006), 158.

²⁸³ Soon after the 2011 revolution, members of MB’s younger generation broke off and formed their own party as a result of several internal disagreements. Refer to Noha El-Hennawy, “Defying Leadership, Brotherhood Youth Form New Party,” *Al-Masry al-Youm*, June 21 2011, accessed, June 21 2011, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/en/node/470079>

disagreements amongst the MB organization, especially pertaining to the use of violence.²⁸⁴ It is precisely the matter of employing violent means that led to the assassination of al-Banna himself as well as that of a prominent prime minister.²⁸⁵

The Social and Political Activities of the MB During its Formative Years

The MB continued their efforts in counteracting the secularization of Egypt throughout the late 1930s. They formed a youth organization - the yellow-shirted "rovers"- in direct reaction to the Green Shirts of the Young Egypt party and the Blue Shirts of the nationalist Wafd.²⁸⁶ They organized and led rallies and demonstrations in the name of *sharia* law and its implementation in Egypt's legal framework. Expectedly, with their excellent organizational skills and al-Banna's charismatic personality, the MB were so successful in recruiting more followers and supporters, that they eventually appeared on the political scene as the Wafd party's main contenders.²⁸⁷ According to Richard Mitchell, on the premises of the Cairo University:

"The main divide was between supporters of the Wafd and of the Muslim Brothers. In effect, "the communists were in tactical alliance with the Wafd; the Brothers were most usually supported by the National Party, the young Egypt party of Ahmed Husayn, and a number of smaller groups of various political shadings."²⁸⁸

²⁸⁴ Barbara Zollner, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Hasan al-Hudaybi and Ideology* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 13-14.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Soage and Franganillo, 40.

²⁸⁷ Mitchell, 43.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 42.

Al-Banna's belief that Islam was an all-comprehensive religion encouraged him to influence and infiltrate all segments of Egyptian society. As they formed a strong bond with the labour movement, the MB engaged Egypt's population through economic means, and "established enterprises of its own and granted workers shareholding rights in those companies."²⁸⁹ Ultimately, al-Banna's vision did not include the Brotherhood overtaking the current governing power, as he would support whichever structure existed, reforming it from the inside by continually attempting to implement Islamic guiding laws and principles to the existing government's laws.²⁹⁰ To this effect, al-Banna wrote to King Farouk on several occasions, to give him suggestions and alternative plans to a better system of governance through the implementation of Islamic principles.²⁹¹

The MB's First Attempt at Electoral Participation

Forming a political party, or functioning like one, was not one of al-Banna's ultimate goals, despite the fact that he ran and lost parliamentary elections in 1942 and 1945.²⁹² He fielded seventeen candidates in the elections, with him running in the governorate of Ismailiyya.²⁹³ These events took place, despite his aversion to participating in and acknowledging secular institutions and activities, as he believed that the practice of elections was against the basic tenets of Islam and *sharia*, and in direct contradiction to the concept of *bay'a*.²⁹⁴ To make

²⁸⁹ Dede., 223.

²⁹⁰ Zahid, 75.

²⁹¹ Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 41.

²⁹² Pargeter, 24.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ *Bay'a* refers to a show of unity where all Muslims in an Islamic state, declare their allegiance to one ruler. Refer to Pargeter, 24.

matters more difficult for al-Banna and his candidates, the government pressured al-Banna and his followers to “make a written statement declaring his loyalty to the government and the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, which was the legal foundation for the British presence in Egypt,”²⁹⁵ in addition to withdrawing from elections. Despite his condemnation of political parties as a Western imposition that contradicted the concept of *bay‘a* and unity and promoted fragmentation and disunity, he proposed that the Brotherhood join *al-Hizb al-Watani* (the nationalist party). Under the impression that a link with a highly popular party would assist his own movement, al-Banna did not mind allowing for an exception to his rule.²⁹⁶

Al-Banna’s Accommodationist Approach and Methods

Al-Banna’s actions, during his brief rule of the MB organization, are reflected in the MB’s evolving relationship with the regimes of Nasser, Sadat, Mubarak and the post-revolution era. His ‘accommodationist’ style is evident in his changing views of electoral and parliamentary politics and relationship with the governing system; he did not outright forbid or reject the violent tactics of many of his fellow Brothers. Despite his own moderate personal vision, he accommodated his more militant supporters by forming a secret paramilitary group under the name of *Nizam al-Khass* (Special Apparatus).²⁹⁷ According to one of the founding members of the group, al-Banna had in mind an idea of a “(military) aspect of *da‘wa* (proselytizing or preaching of Islam) activity ...of a military group that would encapsulate the idea of jihad in Islam... he was keen to

²⁹⁵ Pargeter, 24.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Soage and Franganillo, 40.

emphasize military activity in order to demonstrate the idea of jihad. But he was frightened.”²⁹⁸

Al-Banna’s actions during the Second World War marked the turning point between him and the monarchy of King Farouk. Al-Banna took part in anti-British pro-Axis plotting, which resulted in his banishment from Cairo and the banning of the MB’s meetings and publications.²⁹⁹ In retaliation to the dissolution and banning of the MB, the Special Apparatus took matters in their own hands, and launched a series of violent attacks against the British, killing an Egyptian judge and attempting a bomb attack on a Cairo courthouse in 1948.³⁰⁰ However, it was the assassination of Prime Minister Nuqrashi in December 1948 that decided al-Banna’s tragic fate. By that time, the membership of the MB had reached two million people.³⁰¹ Unaware of the existence of on-going internal tensions within the organization, and desperate to appease the government, al-Banna issued a public statement declaring that those who perpetrated the acts of violence were “neither brothers, nor are they Muslims.”³⁰² His efforts to detach himself from the violent forces within his movement were all for naught as he was shot and killed by the government’s secret police on February 12, 1949.³⁰³ Expectedly, his assassination was followed by mass arrests of MB members. The organization got a second chance to redeem itself and atone for its actions when the ban on the movement was lifted in 1951.³⁰⁴ The MB joined forces with the Free Officers

²⁹⁸ Pargeter, 27.

²⁹⁹ Soage and Franganillo, 40.

³⁰⁰ Mitchell, 68.

³⁰¹ Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 42.

³⁰² Mitchell, 68.

³⁰³ Zahid, 77.

³⁰⁴ Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 42.

led by Nasser and Mohammed Naguib, and successfully overthrew King Farouk in 1952.³⁰⁵

The 1952 Revolution and the Nasser Era

During his short leadership of the MB, Hasan al-Banna was seen as a charismatic leader who single-handedly founded the well-structured organization of the MB.³⁰⁶ The only other individual to gain a popular following such as that experienced by al-Banna was ideologist Sayyid Qutb, but he was never burdened with the responsibility of the highest position of the General Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood.³⁰⁷ In effect, Al-Banna's position remained unoccupied for two years until Hasan el-Hudaybi assumed power. El-Hudaybi was appointed as the General Guide,³⁰⁸ and with his ties to the palace,³⁰⁹ the retired judge led the turbulent and highly unstable organization into a new era. Unfortunately, this era was marked by mass arrests, torture and executions, as Nasser and the Free Officers rose to power and eradicated any faction or institution that might have been a source of threat to their stability.³¹⁰

With the expulsion of King Farouk and dissolution of his court and rule, the MB had served its purpose, and in 1954 Nasser dissolved the organization of the MB.³¹¹ The reasons for the dissolution of the organization could be found in the events of those two years between the 1952 revolution and 1954 when the MB

³⁰⁵ Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 43.

³⁰⁶ Zahid, 73- 78.

³⁰⁷ Marcotte, 62.

³⁰⁸ Zollner, 3, 22.

³⁰⁹ Soage and Franganillo, 41.

³¹⁰ Pargeter, 34 and Hatina, 30.

³¹¹ Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 43.

was banned. The difference in views among the MB members had managed to exacerbate quickly after al-Banna's assassination, and they were manifested in one grave and extremely memorable error in judgment: attempting to assassinate Nasser.³¹² In 1952, due to the Brotherhood's close ties to the Free Officers, they were safe from the new government's actions to eradicate all rivals and opposition.³¹³ Classified as an association, the Brotherhood was not disbanded like other organizations.³¹⁴ As a matter of fact, they even believed that they had the necessary leverage to demand of Nasser certain changes to the legal code; changes that Nasser refused, as they mostly centred around the full application of *sharia* as the legal basis of the Egyptian government.³¹⁵ Nasser's conundrum was that while he was not responsive to the continuous protests and flow of demands from the Brotherhood, he was not in the position to give up their support and popular backing.³¹⁶ He, thus, invited the MB to join the 'Freedom Organization' (*Hai'at al-Tahrir*), which was formed by Nasser and the Free Officers. The 'Freedom Organization' aimed to "represent the people directly" and pool the resources of previous organizations into one political hub.³¹⁷ Suspecting that the MB would lose its independence if it were brought under

³¹² With the Free Officers in power, they wanted to mobilize Egypt to a more socialist way of life, whereas the MB was adamant about transforming Egypt into an Islamic state and reverting back to Islam. Coupled with eal-Hudaybi's inability to control the MB's Special Apparatus that has taken a more violent stance towards all non-Islamic aspects in Egypt, the MB and the Free Officers parted ways in the most violent of forms. Refer to John R. Bradley, *Inside Egypt: The Land Of The Pharaohs On The Brink Of A Revolution*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2008), 50.

³¹³ Baker, 251-252.

³¹⁴ Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 43.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Baker, 252, Mitchell, 71 and Christina P. Harris, *Nationalism and Revolution in Egypt: The Role of the Muslim Brotherhood* (Westport: Hyperion Press, 1981), 181.

³¹⁷ Zollner, 31.

government control permanently, thereby crippling the organization, el-Hudaybi refused Nasser's invitation.³¹⁸

Expectedly, the rift between the MB and Nasser's government exponentially grew.³¹⁹ At the same time, el-Hudaybi was struggling to communicate and control the paramilitary wing of the organization – the Special Apparatus - which had its own views on dealing with the new government, and ultimately rejected el-Hudaybi's authority and rule.³²⁰ In October 1954, the more zealous members of the Brotherhood tried to assassinate Nasser by shooting him eight times in Alexandria. The organization was obliterated in little time; as six leaders of the organization were executed and thousands of members were imprisoned and tortured.³²¹

Among those imprisoned in 1954 was Qutb, who founded a more radical definition of *jihad*, different from al-Banna. Qutb described *jihad* as a “complete armed rebellion against rule by secular laws and as a declaration of the freedom of man from servitude to other men.”³²² Also, while al-Banna had called for reforms of the Egyptian political and legal systems, by urging leaders to implement Islamic law, Qutb communicated a more violent message; he declared religious war against the Egyptian state.³²³

The members that survived the Free Officer's crackdown and torture went underground. The years between 1954 and 1965 saw two movements taking

³¹⁸ Zollner, 31.

³¹⁹ Zahid, 79.

³²⁰ David L. Phillips, *From Bullets to Ballots: Violent Muslim Movements in Transition* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2009), 816 and Pargeter, 32.

³²¹ Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 43 and Phillips, 8.

³²² Pargeter, 32.

³²³ Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 44.

shape, one in prison with Qutb and his followers, and the other underground members as the remaining free members recruited new people using Islamic rhetoric and symbolism.³²⁴ It was at that time that the women of the Islamist movement gave their greatest input and made a lasting impact on the future of the movement.³²⁵ Qutb's powerful ideologies, which strongly spoke against the regime that targeted the Brothers and tortured them - as a result of their popularity among the lower and middle classes - gave way to an identity to which many Islamists related. The Qutbist movement was created and grew within the organization by the mid 1960s, and was given the name 'Organization 1965'.³²⁶ Eventually, this movement became a stepping-stone to the formation of the militant *Takfir wil Hijra* group that was established by the Qutbist Mustafa Shukri, who opposed the Brotherhood's accommodationist and pacifist approach towards the authoritarian government.³²⁷ By the time the Muslim Brotherhood was rebuilt in 1965, the government realized that the MB presented a real potential threat to the continuity of its rule. Nasser responded quickly and destructively, by authorizing twenty thousand arrests, replete with torture and executions.³²⁸ Qutb was among those executed.

It has been argued that the government wanted to ensure that they could monopolize or at least control Islamist trends and achieve full legitimacy in the eyes of Egypt's Muslim majority.³²⁹ As a result, Nasser gained control of Al-

³²⁴ Zollner, 41- 42.

³²⁵ Ibid. and Abdel-Latif, 3.

³²⁶ Pargeter, 34.

³²⁷ Ibid., 35.

³²⁸ Roded, 258.

³²⁹ Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam: Religion, Activism, and Political Change in Egypt*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.), 9-10.

Azhar; long perceived as the main centre of Islamic learning and jurisprudence.³³⁰ In addition, Nasser believed that controlling al-Azhar would curb the MB's popularity and influence that threatened the stability of his government.³³¹ Nasser's fears were not unfounded. As Egypt's defeat in the 1967 war broke down the nation's resolve and faith in Nasser's pan-Arabist vision, Egyptians searched for another beacon of hope and unity, eventually gravitating towards the growing number of Islamist groups for a "religious alternative to Nasser's secular, socialist political style."³³²

The death of Nasser in 1970 marked the end of Arabism in Egypt. Arabism disintegrated due to Sadat's changes in Egypt's governing style and market economy.³³³ In effect, he supported more liberal policies such as the privatisation of the economy and allowing more political participation.³³⁴ Just like Nasser, Sadat manipulated the people's religious sentiments and their high regard for religious symbols to further his popularity and political agenda, and to counteract Nasser's loyalists and leftists in the ASU.³³⁵

The Sadat era and the Introduction of the MB to Party Politics

As the MB's membership steadily grew due to their continuing *da'wa* movement and popularity amongst student associations and professional

³³⁰ Bassma Kodmani, "The Dangers of Political Exclusion: Egypt's Islamist Problem," *Carnegie Papers Middle East Series*, 63 (October 2005), 9.

³³¹ Mostafa, 5.

³³² Sullivan, 43.

³³³ Hatina, 32.

³³⁴ Michele Dunne, "Evaluating Egyptian Reform," *Carnegie Papers Middle East Series* 66 (January 2006), 9.

³³⁵ Hatina, 32.

syndicates, the government again responded with arrests and interrogations.³³⁶ Despite that, the 1980s saw regular elections and a greater degree of freedom of the press of which the MB took full advantage.³³⁷ The 1980s also saw the first of many attempts by the MB's new generation to establish a political party. Nevertheless, the Parties Commission continually rejected their applications, as religion based political parties were not allowed.³³⁸ At the same time, the commission turned down "90 percent of all applications to set up political parties, irrespective of the political or religious affiliation of the applicants."³³⁹

With the support of the Sadat government, the new generation of the MB emerged as major players in Egypt's social and political scene. While the older generation was sceptical of the government, due to their experience of arrests and torture under Nasser's rule, the younger generation believed in expanding their support base though running in every election to further their national exposure.³⁴⁰ Because the organization already had efficient organizational skills and the tools to organize political campaigns, the MB's younger generation which included prominent members such Abu-Ala al-Madi, Essam el-Erian and Abd al-Moneim Abul-Fotouh, easily landed in "leading positions within the unions of their respective professional trade."³⁴¹ For all intents and purposes, the 1970s saw the

³³⁶ Baker, 248-250 and Nathan Brown, *Constitutions in a Non-constitutional World: Arab Basic Laws and the Prospects for Accountable Government* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 68.

³³⁷ Soage and Franganillo, 43.

³³⁸ Refer to Egypt's 1977 law on political parties which stipulates that founding a religiously based party was not allowed.

³³⁹ Soage and Franganillo, 45.

³⁴⁰ Hatina, 82.

³⁴¹ Soage and Franganillo, 44.

resumption of al-Banna's pragmatic accommodationist style.³⁴² The MB decided to fully utilize the newfound freedom by spreading their message through the use of the constitutional channels that were presented by Sadat's government.³⁴³ To further prove their commitment to accommodating the government, the third General Guide Omar al-Tilmisani was pushing for the MB to become more of a civil society organization without a violent entity. On the other hand, the older members of the MB, especially those belonging to the Special Apparatus like Mustafa Mashhur and Kamal al-Sananiri, fiercely opposed this move.³⁴⁴ However, the MB's renunciation of violence as a strategy, and their redefinition of the concept of jihad to represent more of a personal and collective struggle for social justice for the purpose of building an Islamic state,³⁴⁵ set the MB apart from militant Islamist groups such as *al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya*, which was ultimately responsible for Sadat's assassination.³⁴⁶

For the next several national elections, the MB ran in alliance with other parties.³⁴⁷ In the 1984 People's Assembly elections, the MB ran as part of the Wafd Party's list. It was a situation that suited both sides. The Wafd was one of the oldest political parties dating back to the early 1900s and was fully legitimized and ingrained in Egypt's political culture; and the Brotherhood had the popular

³⁴² Sana Abed-Kotob, "The Accommodationists Speak: Goals and Strategies of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 27, no.3 (August 1995): 334-335, accessed November 1, 2010, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/176254>

³⁴³ Baker, 244-253.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 45.

³⁴⁵ Dede, 17.

³⁴⁶ Fundamentalist military officers were responsible for the assassination, which was approved by a fatwa issued by Omar Abdel Rahman who was a prominent member of al Jamaa Al-Islamiyya. Sadat became unpopular amongst the Muslim Brotherhood and militant Islamist groups due to the 1978 Camp David Treaty with Israel.

³⁴⁷ Linjakumpu, 82.

backing and numbers to ensure a sufficient number of votes.³⁴⁸ This alliance gained fifteen percent of the vote, 58 seats, where eight seats went to the MB's candidates.³⁴⁹ Proving that the organization had an agenda of its own and was only loyal to its vision, the MB switched allying fronts and decided to run with the Labour and Liberal Parties for the 1987 elections.³⁵⁰ Because those parties were not as dedicated to their vision and mission as the Wafd party was, the MB was able to convince the Labour and Liberal Parties to adopt their goal: to include the implementation of *sharia* as part of its program.³⁵¹ This alliance came to be known as the Islamic Alliance, which won seventeen percent of the vote, 56 seats, with the MB occupying 36 seats.³⁵²

The MB's Growing Political Exposure

The 1990s marked a drastic change in the relationship between the MB and the government. The Mubarak regime sought to cut down and undermine the MB's power and societal influence through the introduction of a new electoral law that favoured Mubarak's National Democratic Party (NDP).³⁵³ In the months leading up to the 1990 parliamentary elections, this law was introduced which

³⁴⁸ Hatina, 34-37.

³⁴⁹ Phillips, 17.

³⁵⁰ Soage and Franganillo, 45.

³⁵¹ At that time, the Labor Party was undecided as to whether it should stay the course with its secularist agenda or adopt a more Islamic approach. Refer to Robert Springborg, *Mubarak's Egypt: Fragmentation of the Political Order*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), 201 and Soage and Franganillo, 45.

³⁵² Soage and Franganillo, 45.

³⁵³ The new law replaced all party lists with a two-round majority-poll where votes were cast for candidates, not for parties. That gave the NDP the necessary edge against other parties, as most of the NDP members ran as independents.

resulted in the MB and Wafd Party boycotting the elections in protest.³⁵⁴ The 1995 elections were marred by undemocratic practices of discrimination by the government and the NDP against opposition parties such as the MB. Expectedly, the women nominees suffered as well. In addition, the MB's popularity in professional syndicates led the government to freeze elections within these syndicates to prevent their further success and advancement, despite the fact that the MB never constituted more than fifteen percent of the syndicates' membership, which according to Ottaway is only reflective of a protest vote.³⁵⁵

In 1995, aware of the threat presented by the MB as a result of its forceful voice in professional syndicates, Mubarak publicly denounced the society for its politicization of the unions during his Labour Day speech.³⁵⁶ To make matters worse for the MB, an assassination attempt on Mubarak's life took place in June 1995, while he was in Addis Ababa for a meeting of the Organization of African Unity. The MB denied any prior knowledge of the attack and condemned such violence, but it was reprimanded and accused of communicating with the responsible parties: the Sudanese National Front and the Egyptian Jihad and *al-Jama'at Islamiyya* groups.³⁵⁷ MB members were rounded up by the thousands and were subjected to military trials.³⁵⁸ Fifty-four MB members received three to five years of hard labour, including the most influential members for the new generation: el-Eryan, Muhammad Khayrat, Muhammad Habib, and Abul-

³⁵⁴ Soage and Franganillo, 46.

³⁵⁵ Marina Ottaway, *Democracy Challenged: The Rise of Semi-Authoritarianism*, (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for Intentional Peace, 2003), 46-47.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 48.

³⁵⁷ Hesham Al-Awadi, "Mubarak and the Islamists: Why Did the 'Honeymoon' End?" *Middle East Journal* 59, no. 1 (2005): 76. Accessed November 1, 2010. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4330097>

³⁵⁸ Jason Brownlee, *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization* (Cambridge University Press: New York, 2007), 127.

Fotouh.³⁵⁹ The events that took place that year were regarded as the most corrupt and most violent forms of abuse of power shown by the Mubarak government against the non-NDP candidates contesting for parliamentary seats.³⁶⁰ The MB was able to field seventeen candidates, triggering violent reactions and demonstrations at the doors of voting stations, as the Mubarak regime scrambled to stop the MB from securing one-third of Parliament seats.³⁶¹ The police killed dozens and hundreds were injured as the Mubarak regime secured a 94 percent majority.³⁶² Just one Brother was elected, and was later disqualified for “belonging to a banned organization.”³⁶³

The Organization and its Ideologies

The MB is internationally known for its Islamic ideology and its well-organized movement. Robert Mitchell’s book “The Society of Muslim Brothers” offers the most meticulous and detailed description of the Brotherhood’s hierarchical structures.³⁶⁴ It is important to note that following the Arab Spring; the MB has announced that there will be changes within the MB regarding its hierarchy and the internal elections for its *Shura* Council and Guidance Bureau.³⁶⁵

³⁵⁹ Al-Awadi, “Mubarak and the Islamists,” 76.

³⁶⁰ Aini Linjakumpu, *Political Islam in the Global World*. (Reading: Ithaca Press, 2008), 101-103.

³⁶¹ Zahid, 104.

³⁶² Brownlee, 127-128.

³⁶³ Soage and Franganillo, 48.

³⁶⁴ Mitchell, 163-170.

³⁶⁵ It has been stated during several interviews with prominent members of the MB, including the previous General Guide Mahdi Akef, that the organization is undergoing a restructuring that will further integrate the Muslim Sisters Division and enable many members to run for internal elections. M.M.A. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 15, 2012.

The MB's Hierarchy and Structure

The most senior position in the Brotherhood's hierarchy is the General Guide, who is both head of the organization and chairman of its major governing bodies: the General Guidance Council and the *Shura* Council. The Guidance Council was legally composed of twelve members, nine from Cairo and three from the provinces. Theoretically, the three components of the central leadership – the General Guide, the Guidance Council, and the *Shura* Council – meet and reform the various functions in the general headquarters located in Cairo. The leading figure at the headquarters is the Secretary-General, and both his secretariat and that of the General Guide were defined as 'the officials of the general headquarters.' The General Guide must be at least forty years of age and must be elected by an absolute majority in the *Shura* Council, from candidates nominated by the Guidance Bureau.³⁶⁶ In reality, decision-making takes place amongst few senior leaders.³⁶⁷ The 100-member *Shura* Council (*majlis al-shura*) is the group's legislative body, responsible for issuing resolutions and reviewing the annual report and budget. The Council is supposed to convene every six months; where its members serve four-year terms and should be at least thirty years old. However, the *Shura* Council whose members are elected by provincial councils, have not met since 1995 according to public knowledge.³⁶⁸ The fifteen-members of the Guidance Council (*majlis al-irshad*) are selected from the *Shura* Council and monitor the decisions in informal

³⁶⁶ Mitchell, 165-169.

³⁶⁷ "Egypt's Muslim Brothers: Confrontation Or Integration?" *International Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report* 76 (18 June 2008): 17.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

consultation with governorate-level leadership. Members of the Bureau should also serve four-year terms and must be at least thirty years of age.

The MB's Principal Documents and Structural Defragmentation

“The Fundamental Law of the Organization of the Muslim Brothers” and “General Internal Regulations” are two primary sources for the MB’s “organizational structures and its administrative and technical operations.”³⁶⁹ The MB’s technical operations have two aspects. First, its administrative operation is comprised of six committees (*lijan*), directly responsible to the Guidance Council: financial; policy; legal; statistics; services; and legal opinions.³⁷⁰ Second, there are ten sections (*aqsam*) concerned with ideology or indoctrination: propagation of the MB’s message (*nashr al-da’wa*); labour; peasants; family (*ūsra*); students; liaison with the Islamic world; bodily training; professions; press and translation; and the Muslim Sisters.³⁷¹

According to el-Ghobashy, this organizational structure stayed the same until 1992 when a provision was introduced calling for the re-election of the General Guide and setting the term of office at five years, without specific term limits specified.³⁷² The MB described itself as an organization that follows these eight principles:

“(1) a *da’wa* from the *Quran* and the *Sunna* of the Prophet Mohamed
(2) a method that adheres to the *Sunna* (3) a reality whose core is the purity of the soul (4) a political association (5) an athletic association

³⁶⁹ Mitchell, 163.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ Ibid., 170.

³⁷² El-Ghobashy, “The Metamorphosis Of The Egyptian Muslim Brothers,” 377.

(6) an educational and cultural organization (7) an economic enterprise and (8) a social concept.”³⁷³

Due to the organization’s illegal and underground status, it was difficult to convene and meet with the MB’s committees in the frequency and manner stipulated in the organization’s by-laws.³⁷⁴

The Evolution of al-Banna’s Vision and The Present MB

Most of the influential ideologies the MB follows originated from al-Banna, as he introduced the concept of Islam “as a comprehensive system (*nizam shamil*).”³⁷⁵ With the MB being originally a grassroots movement, working within the current governing system, its ideology centred on working to change the existing political culture as a prelude to transforming the state.³⁷⁶ It continually changed and adapted to different political opportunities, all the while building on its popularity and following.

As mentioned earlier, al-Banna was not in full support of multiparty representation. In his opinion, without multiple parties “parliamentary life is perfectly compatible with the teaching of Islam; because parties create ‘disunity’ in the nation making them incompatible with Islam.”³⁷⁷ At the same time, al-Banna had several ideas for reforming the Egyptian Parliament and parties. His propositions included:

³⁷³ Abed- Kotob, 323.

³⁷⁴ El-Ghobashy, “The Metamorphosis Of The Egyptian Muslim Brothers,” 377.

³⁷⁵ Soage, “Yusuf al-Qaradawi,” 27.

³⁷⁶ Lee, 109.

³⁷⁷ Israel Elad Altman, “Strategies of the Muslim Brotherhood Movement: 1928-2007,” *Hudson Institute* (2009): 10.

“(1) the establishment of a catalogue of ‘qualities’ which should inhere in candidates whether they are representative of an ‘organization’ or not; (2) the definition of a limit to electioneering; (3) the reform of election schedules and voting procedures to free them from tampering of vested interests and compulsory voting; (4) ‘harsh punishment’ for election ‘forgery and bribery.’”³⁷⁸

It cannot be denied that, as an organization, the Brotherhood endured more incidents of violence and oppression than most organizations in the region.³⁷⁹ As a result, the Brotherhood continues to be distrustful of the government or any governing entity.³⁸⁰ The same caution is exercised in their dealings with most organizations and political parties, to the extent that the MB has become characterized by many as an elusive unit with a well-hidden agenda.³⁸¹ More often than not, the women of the MB executed these agendas, with al-Ghazali being the most active *da’iya* and Muslim Sister, during the Nasser era of MB oppression and imprisonment.

Point of Convergence: Zaynab al-Ghazali

Islamist influences have been evident in feminist writing since the birth of the women’s rights movement in Egypt. In 1907, Jamileh Hafez was the first Egyptian woman to publish a journal which she dedicated mostly to detailing and explaining women’s rights in Islam.³⁸² The Islamist and feminist movements have experienced similar interactions with the Egyptian regime, and have battled on the same grounds against the authoritarian powers of the Egyptian government.

³⁷⁸ Mitchell, 261.

³⁷⁹ Linjakumpu (2008) Zollner (2009) al-Awadi (2004).

³⁸⁰ Al-Awadi (2004), 171.

³⁸¹ Hatina, 50-72.

³⁸² Talhami, 7.

Nevertheless, they have always been on opposite sides in regards to women's rights and liberties.³⁸³ According to Hafez, Zaynab al-Ghazali's work was a strong force, which aimed to improve the lives of those belonging to both movements.³⁸⁴

As stated previously in this chapter, al-Ghazali started her activist career in the fold of Shaarawi's EFU. Soon enough, she became disillusioned with the Union's lack of religious direction, and at the age of eighteen, al-Ghazali formed her own women's organization: the MLA in 1937.³⁸⁵ Al-Ghazali represented the new generation of Islamist feminists that sprouted from Shaarawi's rich grounds of female activism. She differed from Shaarawi in two major aspects. First, she championed women's rights as long as it was in the name of Islam and within an Islamic framework.³⁸⁶ Second, she actively opposed the governing rule through her literary contributions, whether it was the British rule or that of Nasser and the Free Officers.³⁸⁷ More often than not, her opposition was in line with the underground banned movement – the Muslim Brotherhood.

Al-Ghazali gained worldwide recognition due to her autobiography.³⁸⁸ Many academics and analysts have studied and presented their findings and conclusions on al-Ghazali's life and achievements within the MB and her MLA organization.³⁸⁹ In effect, she still remains the first of many female Muslim activists in Egypt. Yet, there is some contention, as to whether she led her life as an Islamist; and an integral part of the MB, or as an Islamic feminist - a person

³⁸³ Baker, 266-267.

³⁸⁴ Refer to Zaynab al-Ghazali's autobiography: *Days of my Life* (1986).

³⁸⁵ Sullivan, 115.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 116-117.

³⁸⁷ Lewis, 6.

³⁸⁸ Her memoir *'Ayyam min Hayati* was translated into English as *Return of the Pharaoh*, trans. Mokrane Guezzou (Leicester: Islamic Foundation Press, 1994).

³⁸⁹ Hoffman (1985) Duval (1998) Al-Guindi (2005) Badran (2009) Baron (2005).

who dedicated her life's work for the advancement of women's rights within the margins of Islam.³⁹⁰ Al-Ghazali's literary work in the form of books, articles, and editorials focus on the woman's first and foremost duty as a mother and a wife. She insisted that without the successful fulfilment of those roles, the Islamic *ūmma* will fail and regress into another dark age - *jahiliyya* - driven by Westernized influences.³⁹¹ During the MLA's active years (1936-1964), al-Ghazali added on to the responsibilities of the MLA by training women the virtues and responsibilities of *da'wa*. The MLA's *da'wa* operation was known as the 'Centre for Preaching and Advice' and was affiliated with the al-Azhar University. Al-Ghazali's organization continued to train women in the skills of *da'wa* until the late 1950s.³⁹²

Egypt's history of women's movements had just as many Islamist activists as secular voices.³⁹³ Al-Ghazali's legacy stands on its own, however, as she was the only female activist to publicly state her loyalty and affiliation to the MB, all while keeping her organization separate and independent. When she declined al-Banna's invitation to fold her organization into the MB's, al-Ghazali responded:

"Zaynab al-Ghazali al-Jubayli approaches you as a slave who has nothing but her worship of God and her total devotion to the service of God's call. You are the only one today who can sell this slave at the price he wishes for the cause of God, the exalted."³⁹⁴

³⁹⁰ Karam (1998) Cooke (1995) Marcotte (1995) Mahmood (2005).

³⁹¹ Lewis, 23, 37 and Duval, 67.

³⁹² Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Revival of the Feminist Subject*. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), 67.

³⁹³ Most notable of the Islamist female activists in Egypt are: Labiba Ahmad, Dr. Heba Raouf Ezzat, Safinaz Kazim. Refer to Hafez (2011) Fernea (1998) Joseph and Slyomovics (2001) Baron (2005) Hatem (1990).

³⁹⁴ Valerie Hoffman, "An Islamic Activist: Zaynab al-Ghazali," in *Women and the family in the Middle East: New Voices of Change*, ed. Elizabeth Fernea (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), 239.

As a result of declining al-Banna's invitation, the MLA openly developed 118 branches with over three million members, until it was taken apart by the Nasser regime in 1964.³⁹⁵ Nevertheless, al-Ghazali was an integral part of the MB's activities, especially when they were banned in 1954, and many of its senior members were arrested and imprisoned. Al-Ghazali continued their work on the grassroots level by integrating herself into their Egyptian *da'wa* movement. Due to the nature of al-Ghazali's organization - which was viewed as a woman's philanthropic gathering - it escaped the wrath of the Nasser regime.³⁹⁶ In 1957, the MLA gained official recognition under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Affairs.³⁹⁷

When al-Ghazali refused to cohort with the Nasser regime and spy on the MB, her organization was disbanded, and she was forced to continue to meet with other MLA members in the privacy of her home.³⁹⁸ At the same time, her home also served as a meeting place for the MB's younger members.³⁹⁹ Organizing underground activities and cooperating with the MB were enough to anger the ruling regime, and to get her arrested in 1965, along with many MB members.⁴⁰⁰ In 1966, she stood trial and was sentenced to hard labour for life, and her association was banned permanently.⁴⁰¹ In 1971 she was released as an act of good grace on behalf of Sadat.⁴⁰²

³⁹⁵ Baron, 211.

³⁹⁶ Roded, 258.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

³⁹⁸ Lamia Rustum Shehadeh, *The Idea of Women in Fundamentalist Islam*. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), 125.

³⁹⁹ Hoffman, 247.

⁴⁰⁰ Badran, "Competing Agenda: Feminism," 215.

⁴⁰¹ Zuhur, *Revealing Reveiling* (1992), 45.

⁴⁰² Shehadeh, 124.

Throughout her life, even after she was released from prison, she advocated women's rights and female participation in the Egyptian society, but strictly within the confines of an Islamic framework.⁴⁰³ Due to her strong aversion to secular feminism and to anything with a Western theme, her *da'was* centred on spirituality and conservatism.⁴⁰⁴ But the fact of the matter was that her ideologies contained a strong feminist influence as she continually fought for the inclusion of women in the Egyptian society, to fulfil their calling and take their place in building a strong Egyptian Islamic state.⁴⁰⁵ At the same time, all her efforts to include women within the Egyptian society were tinged with her support of maintaining a patriarchal traditional establishment within every Egyptian household and institution.⁴⁰⁶ She believed that Islam contained no issues that were women-centric, as the religion viewed men and women in a unified sense with clearly defined roles for each. In effect, al-Ghazali believed that both sexes were equal in the eyes of God in terms of 'divine blessing'. However, when it came to worldly issues, she believed in gender roles and responsibilities such that leadership roles were made for men, while roles that depended on nurturing characteristics were of the women's specialty; seeing that women represent the mothers and caregivers of partnerships between men and women in an Islamic society.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰³ T. Philips, 266-267.

⁴⁰⁴ Lewis, 21-22.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., 24.

⁴⁰⁶ Shehadah, 135.

⁴⁰⁷ Hafez, 68.

But what was most memorable about al-Ghazali, and a matter of extensive research,⁴⁰⁸ is the contradiction between her ideologies and her personal life and work. When researching her life's work, one finds that she is presented as a strong courageous woman who stood as an equal amongst the Muslim Brothers and contested the government's secularism, and was jailed for it.⁴⁰⁹ However, she was the same *ikhwanji* who called for Muslim women to stay at home and to tend to their most important job: being a good role model as a mother and educating the future *mujhadeen* (singular of *mujahid*: those who struggle or strive through *jihad*) and tomorrow's Muslim mothers.⁴¹⁰ Furthermore, she did not heed her own call to obey and fulfil one's husband's needs, as she divorced her first husband for standing in the way of her activities of *da'wa* and supporting the Brotherhood.⁴¹¹ When she married her second husband, it was not before he agreed to allow her to continue with her work, and to uphold her right to request a divorce as well, if he could not bear her prioritizing her vision for an Islamic state over that of her wifely duties.⁴¹² Al-Ghazali believed that Muslim women were tasked with responsibilities that far exceeded that of fighting for equal political representation. She expected a good Muslim woman to:

“be well educated, cultured, knowing the precepts of the *Quran* and the *Sunna*, knowing world politics, why we are backward, why we don't have technology. The Muslim woman must study all these things, and then raise her son in the conviction that he must possess the scientific tools of the age, and at the same time he must understand Islam, politics, geography, and current events...Islam

⁴⁰⁸ See Baron (2005) Shehadeh (2003) Lewis (2007) Badran (1995) Hoffman (1985).

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ Lewis, 4.

⁴¹¹ Ibid., 44.

⁴¹² Hoffman, 249.

does not forbid women to actively participate in public life...as long as that does not interfere with her first duty as a mother...”⁴¹³

Further, it is because of the Muslim women’s important mission to educate the young, that makes her “duty of *da’wa*” more important than that of a man’s, in al-Ghazali’s opinion.⁴¹⁴ On the political level, al-Ghazali asserted that a woman is equal to a man, in that she is eligible to vote and for political representation in a secular or Islamic government, in accordance with the rights bestowed on her by Islam.⁴¹⁵ After her release in 1971, al-Ghazali continued to advocate for the formation of an Islamic state void of any secular rhetoric or structure.⁴¹⁶ Al-Ghazali held lectures and wrote about her vision for an Islamic society, where women’s rights were realized and respected, in *al-Da’wa* and in *Liwa al-Islam* magazines.⁴¹⁷

According to al-Ghazali, it is the woman - the Muslim mother - who is capable of steering the Islamic *ūmma* in the right direction, by being the role model at home for the future generation of leaders and warriors. However, what made several female writers investigate the life of al-Ghazali further was the contradiction of her *da’wa*, her words of advice to Muslim women and her personal life. At first glance, it would be easy to label her as a hypocrite when she urged women to conform to household and wifely duties; whilst she worked side-by-side with MB activists and outlaws during the Nasser years, divorced her husband when he denied her the freedom to do ‘God’s work’, and chose to heed

⁴¹³ Lewis, 22.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

⁴¹⁵ Shehadeh, 130.

⁴¹⁶ Abed-Kotob, 324.

⁴¹⁷ Shehadeh, 124.

'her calling' towards God and the MB over her obligations towards her second husband, as well as her choice not to bear children.⁴¹⁸ Al-Ghazali, in fact, viewed herself as one of the 'chosen' few who were given the strength and willpower to withstand the oppressive Nasser regime, hence sacrificing her biological duty as mother and wife for the realisation of an Islamic *ūmma*. Mahmood's interpretation of al-Ghazali's verification of her life choices reveals that

"only in situations where a women's loyalty to God is compromised by her obligations toward her husband and family, is there space for debate on this issue, and it is within this space that al-Ghazali formulates her dissent against her husband."⁴¹⁹

Moreover, al-Ghazali particularises in her memoir her experience in prison, where she had first spent a year in the state's military prison with men like Sayyid Qutb, as well as thousands of MB members, giving her further reason to separate her life experiences from that of other Muslim Sisters. Her prison experience presented her with an additional starting point to further compare her experiences to that of the MB's men, who were not bound with overwhelming household duties.⁴²⁰

Throughout her *da'wa* movement, she spoke of her duty and that of Muslim women as two separate - but equally important - set of responsibilities.⁴²¹ She was to continue the legacy of al-Banna by fighting the corruption of Nasser's regime, and to continue her politically-infused *da'wa* movement during the Sadat and Mubarak regimes through the publication of weekly editorials as well as

⁴¹⁸ Lewis, 44, Hafez (2011), 69 and Miriam Cooke, "'Ayyam min Ḥayat': The Prison Memoirs of a Muslim Sister," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 26, no. ½ (March - June 1995): 161, accessed June 16, 2012, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4183370>

⁴¹⁹ Mahmood, "Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent," 183.

⁴²⁰ Cooke (1995), 148.

heading the occasional workshop or conference organized to battle Westernized feminist movements that she viewed as an attempt to cripple the Islamic society from within.⁴²² She described in her books her close relationship with al-Banna, her respect and admiration of his organization and her loyalty to the MB, whilst keeping her autonomy by refusing to combine the MLA with the Muslim Sisters Division. Cooke argues that al-Ghazali feared that if she grouped her association with that of al-Banna's, her voice would be drowned out by al-Banna's formidable organization and she would lose her equal standing, reducing her association and her skills to a "position of complementarity at best, subordination at worst."⁴²³

Al-Ghazali continued to instil in her many readers and followers the virtues of staying at home attending to what is a 'natural place' for a woman, as opposed to trying to juggle both a job, amongst strange and unfamiliar men, as well as her duties at home. She further emphasises that it is the splitting of a mother's time between her job and her home that leads to the degradation of the Islamic society, as she becomes absent in her own home.⁴²⁴ Many female Islamist activists and academics agreed with her views regarding the focus on the family unit from within, such as Ezzat.⁴²⁵ Today's Muslim Sisters agenda complements those views as well, as they are mainly responsible for overseeing the implementation of an Islamic curriculum within the homes of the MB members,

⁴²² Ilan Pape. *The Modern Middle East* (London: Routledge, 2005), 241.

⁴²³ Cooke (1995), 150.

⁴²⁴ Zaynab al-Ghazali, "Al-Mara'a al-Muslima: ila Ayn?" 115.

⁴²⁵ Heba Rauf Ezzat, "Secularism, the State and the Social Bond: The Withering Away of the Family," in *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East*, ed. John Esposito and Azzam Tamimi (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 134-136.

and continuing their *da'wa* movement for the purpose of creating a healthy and strong Islamic society in Egypt and eventually on a global level.⁴²⁶

In al-Ghazali's perspective, there was no contradiction between the way she lived her life and the ideas she preached. She explained that she did not have any child-rearing obligations, and she knew of her calling at the age of eighteen. Additionally, it was before she was married that she pledged her life to God and to the achievement of an Islamic *ūmma*.⁴²⁷ Cooke provides an alternative interpretation to al-Ghazali's mixed messages. She argues that if al-Ghazali had practised what she preached, i.e. encouraged the Sisters and all women to set aside their responsibilities towards their husbands and worked outside of their homes in matters that did not concern her family, she might have posed a serious threat to the men in religious movements such as the MB. In effect, al-Ghazali "pragmatically chose a rhetoric of domesticity which allowed her to live a life of public activism."⁴²⁸ It must be noted that despite the recognition that al-Ghazali attained as a *da'iya* and MB member, there have been some questions as to the reliability of her information. Her books recounting her days in prison detailed her visions and dreams of her conversations with the Prophet and al-Banna.⁴²⁹ There is, thus, some reluctance to depend completely on her published work and speeches as viable sources of factual information.⁴³⁰

⁴²⁶ Dahlia Abdel-Raheem, "Ta'heel al- Zahrat" Litarweej afkar al-Tantheem," [Schooling Young Girls to Promote Ideas of the Organization] *6th of October weekly Magazine*, November 8, 2009, 28-29.

⁴²⁷ Shehadeh, 122-124.

⁴²⁸ Cooke (1995), 40.

⁴²⁹ See al-Ghazali, *Ayyam min Hayati*.

⁴³⁰ Lewis, 35 and Hussam Tammam, "Egyptian Muslim Sisterhood and a New Historic Testimony." *Al-Ahram English*, September 15, 2011, accessed December 22, 2011,

When comparing her memoir to that of Abdel-Hadi's, it becomes obvious that while the latter contained facts, dates and details, the former's accounts were overwhelmed with passion and fervour for the Islamic cause and the road to martyrdom.⁴³¹

It is important to note that Zaynab al-Ghazali was not the only activist who was considered an Islamist feminist.⁴³² Labiba Ahmed also paved the way for today's Islamist feminists, but she mostly stayed out of the limelight.⁴³³ She, too, pushed for the Islamization of the Egyptian society, but not necessarily the state.⁴³⁴ She wanted Islam as a guide to a way of life and to ensure women's equality in her society.⁴³⁵ At the same time, she maintained strong bonds with pivotal personalities who were responsible for the 1919 revolution.⁴³⁶ For example, she preferred the Islamic influence evident in the nationalist Watani Party to that of the liberal Wafdist party, as the members of the Watani party were avid supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood and the concept of gender segregation.⁴³⁷

At a time when secular feminists were active and defiant of British rule, Labiba's nationalist and feminist efforts can be traced through her activities within

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContentPrint/4/0/21263/Opinion/0/Egyptian-Muslim-Sisterhood-and-a-new-historic-test.aspx>

⁴³¹ Fatima Abdel-Hadi, *Rihlati maa' al akhwat al muslimat : Min al Imam Hasam Al Banna ila Sujoon Abdel Nasir*. [My Journey with the Muslim Sisters: from Imam Hasan al Banna to the Prisons of Abdel Nasser] (Cairo: Dar al Shorouq, 2011), 9.

⁴³² Lewis, 46.

⁴³³ Baron, 189, 219.

⁴³⁴ Ibid., 189.

⁴³⁵ Ibid., 212.

⁴³⁶ Labiba took centre stage in the demonstrations marking the departure of Safiyya Zaghloul for Gibraltar to join Saad in exile in October 1922. At the Cairo train station, Labiba presented Safiyya with a Quran, an Arabic almanac, a book of blessings (*Dala'il al-Khayrat*) and a list of women and girls who had pledged on the Quran to support the principle of complete independence for Egypt and the Sudan.

⁴³⁷ Baron, 189.

the Society of Ladies' Awakening to the Muslim Sisters. Labiba and her fellow sisters set certain codes a woman should live by, which included actions that resulted in the following outcomes:

“The happiness of her household; to maintain proper modesty in the street; to wear traditional Egyptian dress and to cover her face, hands, and other body parts stipulated by Islamic law; to avoid theaters and comedy houses; and to leave behind corrupt ancient customs.”⁴³⁸

A delegation from the Society of Ladies' Awakening marched in a women's demonstration on 22 March 1921 in support “of ‘Adli Yakan’s ministry, which the Wafd opposed.”⁴³⁹ During their march, the women carried banners with the name of the organization in unison to that of their president under the sign of three stars, a cross, and crescent – a common combination of symbols that reflected Egyptian national unity at the time.⁴⁴⁰ However, her rhetoric started to take on a more Islamist tone as she joined the Muslim Sisters. During that period, Labiba focused on mobilizing women from working-class neighbourhoods against the British occupation. An example of her mobilization methods could be seen in her encouragement of Egyptian women to sew their own clothes that were manufactured using Egyptian cotton during the boycott of British goods in 1922.⁴⁴¹ Labiba participated in demonstrations, gave speeches, founded associations, published a periodical and spoke on the radio and to gatherings, where she was heard throughout the region.

⁴³⁸ Baron, 196.

⁴³⁹ Ibid., 194.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., 193.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., 201.

Even though there is not much literature about Labiba, her accomplishments seem to rival those of al-Ghazali's. Labiba connected different factions and ideologies throughout her active years. She supported the Watani party, and at the same time was linked to the Wafdists and later Islamic nationalists. She also represented a connection between the Salafis⁴⁴² and the MB as she encouraged the abolition of Western practices such as going to the cinemas and modern dress, and at the same time fought for politicizing Islam.⁴⁴³ Despite the fact that the modes of mobilizing the female masses used by Labiba were mostly modern and were mostly practiced in Western and democratic societies, she tirelessly fought to counteract the feminist and secularist strains that were infiltrating Egyptian homes. Labiba was also described in some instances as a Salafist, as she opposed folk customs (much like the Salafis living in Egypt today) that deviated from Islamic practices and disdained the "blind adoption of Western practices by Egyptian Muslims" that was prominent due to the existence of French and British influences in Egypt at the time.⁴⁴⁴ Moreover, Labiba maintained a close relationship with al-Banna himself due to the similarities in their organizations' vision and missions. Labiba ensured that al-Banna's words were immortalized by documenting his speeches in her journal.⁴⁴⁵ It is important to highlight al-Banna's relationship with a strong female figure, as it reflected the MB's view of women as active agents in Egypt's society and is an

⁴⁴²Salafist or Salafis are devout Muslims who refrain from engaging in modern and secular social practices such as elections and joining political parties, preferring to revert back to the simplicity of life that existed in the days of the Prophet Mohammed in Medina. Additionally, they depend on the strictest and most literal interpretations of the Quran and hadiths, resulting in an unbending community that is unwilling to assimilate with the rest of society.

⁴⁴³ Baron, 196-204.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., 196.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., 209.

acknowledgement of their equal footing with men in society. However, the MB's stance regarding female political participation in today's political sphere might not necessary complement, or mirror, al-Banna's views and practices.

In the 1930s, Labiba began to lay the grounds for her alternative ideas of women's activism. At a time when women still did not have the right to vote, or take on official political positions, Labiba chose to make women's presence felt through the written word. She founded the journal *al-Nahda al-Nisa'iyya* (The Women's Awakening), to disseminate her views, and to contest the images and works of secular feminists, by calling on women to return to their Islamic roots through modesty and conservative practices.⁴⁴⁶ Labiba claimed that hers was "the first Egyptian women's journal" to research "social and religious affairs."⁴⁴⁷ Coincidentally, it was in this journal that al-Ghazali announced the formation of her Muslim Ladies Association. In addition, Labiba supported young writers, both men and women, including Aisha 'Abd al-Rahman, who wrote articles and poems under the pen name *Bint al-Shati'* (Daughter of the Coast).⁴⁴⁸

Nationalism, Islamism and feminism were three ideologies that took root and were nurtured during that transitional period.⁴⁴⁹ Likewise, the transitional period that Egypt is experiencing post-Mubarak and post January 25 revolution, is characterized with the same focus on trying to establish a new Egypt and a

⁴⁴⁶ Marilyn Booth, "May Her Likes Be Multiplied: Famous Women Biography and Gendered Prescription in Egypt, 1892-1935," *Signs: The University of Chicago Press* 22, no. 4 (1997): 842, accessed April 26, 2012, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3175222>

⁴⁴⁷ Baron, 200.

⁴⁴⁸ Aisha 'Abd al-Rahman was well known by her pen-name, a writer and a Professor of Arabic literature in Cairo University. She was a strong defender of women's rights as she published hundreds of articles in the name of female equality rights.

⁴⁴⁹ Baron (2005) Hafez (2001) Kandioyti (1991) Badran (1995) Hafez (2011).

new system of governance.⁴⁵⁰ The only difference is that the ideologies present at the turn of the 20th century formed and grew in reaction to an authoritarian force and oppressive rule.⁴⁵¹ At first, after the toppling of the Mubarak regime, there was no point of contention where these ideologies can work together. That temporary power vacuum resulted in a plethora of political organizations and parties scrambling to undermine one another. One thing is certain: in a political movement, where more pressing issues need to be resolved, such as Egypt's deteriorating economy or its relations with the West and Israel, feminist issues could once again be neglected as other aspects take precedence in the priority ladder.

⁴⁵⁰ The years 2011 and 2012 witnessed conflict amongst different political factions regarding choosing the best course for Egypt, which includes working on its constitution, dealing with the remnants of the old regime and the question of when the SCAF was to step down and hand over power.

⁴⁵¹ The Egyptian people fought to expel the British forces out of Egypt and rid the country of foreign rule. In effect, the different ideologies shared that common goal. Refer to Baron (2005), Hafez (2001), Kandioyti (1991), Badran (1995).

PART I - THE NON-ELECTORAL MOBILIZATION OF THE MUSLIM SISTERS

**CHAPTER FOUR: The Muslim Sisters Division and their Non-electoral
Participation in Egypt's Politics and Society**

CHAPTER FIVE: The Muslim Sisters and the 18-day Revolution

CHAPTER FOUR

The Muslim Sisters Division and their Non-electoral Participation in Egypt's Politics and Society

The first half of the 20th century witnessed Egypt's changing political atmosphere, where a flurry of ideologies and movements surfaced and that intended to characterize the different pockets of Egyptian society. Providing an overview of that time period with the historical background chapter was crucial to explaining the evolution of women's movements in a post-colonial Egypt, as well as the birth of a grassroots Islamist ideology and organization. While, according to some, the feminist movement in Egypt was one of the fastest and most impressive collaborations of strong-willed and educated women within the Middle East,⁴⁵² Nasser's reign saw all non-socialist organizations and their respective activities silenced, with political activists, outside of Nasser's circle, retreating to the dark corners of society.⁴⁵³ An even more violent fate awaited the MB and its Islamist tones. Consequently, the Muslim Sisters did not fare well either.

Al-Banna and the Muslim Sisters

To this day, the MB has yet to experience a leader as charismatic and influential as al-Banna. He preached and lectured groups of Muslims in their homes, coffee shops and mosques, pushing forward Egypt's religious revival.⁴⁵⁴ This was part of al-Banna's strategy to "counter the secularizing trends evident in

⁴⁵² See Keddie (2002) Badran (2009) Hatem (1986) Talhami (1996).

⁴⁵³ Karam, 58.

⁴⁵⁴ Baron, 209.

Egyptian society and to spread Islamic teaching,⁴⁵⁵ much like the attempts of Islamist feminists Labiba Ahmed and Zaynab al-Ghazali in forming the Society of Ladies' Awakening and the Muslim Ladies Association (MLA) respectively.

Al-Banna and his followers also established primary schools that included Islamic teachings and traditions within Egypt's purely secular educational system. In addition, al-Banna supported Egyptian women and young girls by creating a school in Ismaliyya to teach girls ("future mothers") about their religion.⁴⁵⁶ In 1932, his "Institute for Mothers of the Believers" developed into the first branch of the Muslim Sisters (*al-Akhwat al-Muslimat*), which consisted mostly of the female relatives and wives of the Muslim Brothers.⁴⁵⁷ The Muslim Sisters eventually opened a branch in Cairo, with some sources indicating that Labiba Ahmed was in charge of its activities.⁴⁵⁸ In effect, al-Banna took part in the social and political movements, that were brought on by Western and Arab influences in acknowledging and empowering women, by setting up a division dedicated to dealing with those 'women-friendly' interests mentioned above.⁴⁵⁹ Branches of the Muslim Sisters spread throughout Egypt and numbered fifty within four years, with a membership of five thousand.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁵ Baron, 209.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁹ Raymond William Baker, *Sadat and After: Struggles for Egypt's Political Soul* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 265.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., 210.

The Extensive Arrests of MB Members and the Underground Mobilization of the Muslim Sisters

When the MB joined forces with the Free Officers to overthrow the monarchy, it seemed that Egypt would enter a new phase of political freedom; free from oppression and unjust persecution.⁴⁶¹ Whereas Nasser and his comrades had always intended for socialist rule, and only relied on the MB for its impressive human resources and ability to mobilize and steer large numbers of Egyptians for political means.⁴⁶² Soon enough, the alliance that existed between both entities dissolved rapidly. With the widespread arrests and disappearances of MB male members that started in 1954, the MB families were left with no means to support themselves, and were at the mercy of any charitable outlet. The Muslim Sisters took it upon themselves to do what they were trained to do best: provide support and gather donations from the public and MB supporters and sympathizers.⁴⁶³ Abdel-Hadi explained in her memoirs how the Sisters divided their tasks and responsibilities:

“We divided up all our time and tasks in the Muslim Sisters Division. Several of the Sisters were delegated to collecting donations and sending them to the homes and families of the imprisoned MB members and MB fugitives. For each region in Egypt, there was a delegate that gathered those donations from the MB supporters living in her region/district. Each delegate had a list of names of those arrested and their respective addresses and the number of family members left behind. The delegates would then relay this information and data, as we proceed to divide up the rations and donations to distribute in accordance to the data provided. I was in charge of organizing and directing the delegates.”⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁶¹ Zahid, 78-79.

⁴⁶² Karam, 58 and Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 43.

⁴⁶³ Talhami, 30 and Abdel-Hadi, 65.

⁴⁶⁴ Abdel-Hadi, 65.

As the Sisters began to regroup and ease the financial difficulties of the MB homes that were left without a breadwinner amongst them, the police and federal authorities monitored their activities, homes and daily routines. The Sisters also used to attempt to deliver food to the MB inmates at prison. On more than one occasion, Abdel-Hadi and Qutb's sister Amina would prepare the food and head out to the prison to feed the Organization 1965 imprisoned members. Abdel-Hadi described one of the visits:

"I was standing in front of the prison gates looking for a way to deliver the meals, when gunshots were fired, and we proceeded to run away as federal police agents pursued Amina and I. We narrowly escaped."⁴⁶⁵

Abdel-Hadi's husband had managed to avoid arrest for eight to ten months.⁴⁶⁶

During that time period, the police came by her house periodically, subjecting her to routine checks in search of her fugitive husband. Abdel-Hadi recounted one police visit:

"I called out: who's there? To which he countered: 'Open the door or I will break it down. He aimed his gun at my chest and pushed me to the wall. I responded with controlled anger: 'This house has been searched many times. To which he answered 'and we will continue to search it many times more."⁴⁶⁷

Despite the continuous police visits and surveillance, Abdel-Hadi succeeded in meeting with her husband once or twice, after ensuring that she had managed to lose the police officers assigned to follow her. Eventually though, her husband was caught and imprisoned.⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁵ Abdel-Hadi, 57.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., 58.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid., 59.

The Muslim Sisters also faced imprisonment, but before that period the Sisters continued the MB's political activities by serving as messengers and points of contact between their imprisoned family members and those who managed to escape the Egyptian authority.⁴⁶⁹ The correspondences and information shared led to the formation of the 'Organization 1965' which inevitably led to the arrests of many of the Muslim Sisters including Abdel-Hadi and al-Ghazali.⁴⁷⁰ Al-Ghazali represented one faction of the "tripartite rule of the MB" from 1957 until her imprisonment in 1965, when she received a twenty-five year sentence for conspiring to assassinate the president.⁴⁷¹ The two other personalities were Abdel-Fattah Ismail and Sayyid Qutb. It was in these military prisons that al-Ghazali realized her Islamic calling and her duty towards the MB and the Islamic *ūmma*. Her prison memoirs "The Return of the Pharaoh" shed light on the tough experience the Sisters had to endure, and the arrests of both young girls as well as women over the age of sixty, solely because of their connection with MB members:

"We were eight women crammed into a small prison cell. Mrs Naeema, the wife of the General Guide el-Hudaybi was with me as well. She was almost seventy years of age...they did not take into account her age or her physical limitations. Her prison days witnessed a number of trials and harsh situations. Federal agents arrested dozens of Sisters from across Egypt - Mothers and Sisters of the MB male members, as well as women who had no relation to the MB, in addition to the Sisters who are officially charged with partaking in Organization 1965's covert activities like Zaynab al-Ghazali, as well as Amina and Hamida Qutb."⁴⁷²

⁴⁶⁹ Talhami, 51.

⁴⁷⁰ Abdel-Hadi, 65.

⁴⁷¹ Lewis, 25.

⁴⁷² Abdel-Hadi, 76-82.

As opposed to regular female prisoners, Abdel-Hadi recalled that the women of the MB were subjected to harsh conditions in military prisons before being sent to the women's prison.⁴⁷³

When assessing women's roles during the Nasser years through a socialist lens, it is evident that women did attain a few rights and freedoms. With women gaining the right to vote in 1956 and Nasser's socialist program, Egyptian women were encouraged to engage society both socially and politically, and had greater access to all forms of social services. However, those political privileges did not extend to the Muslim Sisters due to their illegal association. The same restrictions on individual rights were felt by women who were part of the feminist movement and who have had their organizations closed and disbanded in the face of an overbearing socialist government.⁴⁷⁴ Moreover, the new opportunities presented to women in the public social domain were not felt in political arenas, which were influenced by the controlling socialist government. The 1957 elections saw only two female Parliament members.⁴⁷⁵

The Result of Sadat's Forgiving Reign: The Flourishing of the MB and its Activities

The Sadat and Mubarak years did not witness the rise of another commanding personality such as al-Ghazali. Al-Ghazali continued her *da'wa* activities well through the Sadat and Mubarak years until her death in 2005.

⁴⁷³ Abdel-Hadi, 77.

⁴⁷⁴ Refer to Chapter Three.

⁴⁷⁵ According to el-Adly the two women represented 0.57 percent of the entire assembly. Naglaa Mohamed el-Adly, "Women quota System in Parliament: A Comparative Study between Egypt and the Scandinavian Countries," (MA thesis, Cairo University, 2007), 44.

Many of today's leading female personalities in the MB and FJP joined the MB and their cause because of her charismatic persona and her ability to successfully recruit new members through her *da'wa*.

Sadat's rule was much gentler on the Muslim Sisters as well as on the MB as a whole. With the release of hundreds of MB members from jail and the resumption of their newspaper and magazine, *al-Da'wa*, the Sadat years presented a more liberal political environment than those of Nasser's with regards to the MB's movement. During the time it was in circulation, it published women-related pieces encouraging the minimization of women's role outside of the home and urging women not to leave their homes except under extraneous circumstances. In addition, if women were to work, the commentaries and editorials suggested that they occupy positions that were complementary to women's gender roles like that of a teacher or gynaecologist and steer away from occupations with negative stigma that surrounded such an administrative role, as a secretary for example, which would leave the female employee exposed to male employees.⁴⁷⁶ As Sadat focused on creating an image of a tolerant Egypt through his liberal economic policies, he had also decided to loosen government's restrictions on political activity.⁴⁷⁷ This was also a response to "mounting pressure for political freedom emanating from a more pluralistic society."⁴⁷⁸ He allowed the MB to resume their activities, but did not grant them legitimacy, by legally recognizing them as an organization. He also allowed the MB to temporarily resume the publication of its old monthly magazine: *Al Da'wa*, in

⁴⁷⁶ A.R.A Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 30, 2012.

⁴⁷⁷ Linjakumpu, 82.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid.

1976.⁴⁷⁹ Even though the publication was banned again in 1981, it efficiently served its purpose as an outlet to the development and dispersal of its Islamist views. The end result was that the 1980s and 1990s in Egypt were described as a time when Islamist activities dominated and started to infiltrate Egyptian popular culture. Young Islamists who were affiliated with the MB led many of these activities including:

“attending (or helping organize) Islamic seminars, plays, and public prayer sessions; voting for (or running as) Brotherhood candidates in student union, faculty club, professional associations or parliamentary elections; distributing campaign literature and running errands during the lead-up to electoral campaigns; and participating in peaceful marches, sit-ins, and demonstrations.”⁴⁸⁰

The second wave of Islamic sentiment was spearheaded by the MB's desire to see an Islamic society within Egypt's borders. In keeping with their accommodationist style, the MB chose to let go of the idea of an Islamic state that would encompass the majority of the Middle Eastern region, and settled for the more reachable goal of an Islamic theocracy that replaces Egypt's secular government. As Sadat allowed the MB more freedom to carry out its activities, he felt the rising pressure with regards the implementation of *sharia* and Islamic law in Egypt. With Sadat's amendment of Article two of the constitution in 1971, making *sharia* a source of legislation, the MB felt they were gaining ground within this regime.⁴⁸¹ At the same time, Sadat embarked upon a liberation program starting with establishing women's rights in an effort to counter the MB's growing popularity and powerful Islamic wave. It was in this context that Sadat, in 1979,

⁴⁷⁹ Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 44.

⁴⁸⁰ Wickham, 165.

⁴⁸¹ Al-Awadi, 92. The same article was amended in 1981 to state that *sharia* is the principal source of legislation.

passed new laws that guaranteed women thirty seats in the National Assembly, well known as Jihan's Law.⁴⁸²

The Scaling Back of the Muslim Sisters' Activities Post-Nasser

The MB were allowed to resume their activities but were still considered a banned organization.⁴⁸³ As Sadat relied on the MB to counter the effects of Nasser, social conservatism began to be widely visible in Egyptian society in the change in dress, appearance and language. This was initially instigated by Muslim and Islamist women, and later by the Muslim Sisters.⁴⁸⁴ In effect, Sadat ensured the termination of the Nasserist influence in the face of strengthening political Islam in Egypt. As the MB adopted an accommodationist style yet again with the regime, so did the Muslim Sisters in assuming a complementary role to the MB social movement. The MB chose to focus on its *da'wa* activities, and whenever possible, access the public sphere through the democratic means that were available to them, such as activities on university campuses and within professional syndicates.⁴⁸⁵ Jihan el-Halafawy recounted that when she joined the MB, "Sadat was opening up a bit and politics were thriving at the universities. ... the Muslim Brotherhood seemed closer to [her] views because it taught that

⁴⁸² Abdel Nasser "Egypt: Succession Politics," 127. Also, refer to page 93 for a discussion on Jihan's Law.

⁴⁸³ Al-Awadi, 35-36.

⁴⁸⁴ Guenena and Wassef, 46 and Mervat F. Hatem. "Economic and Political Liberation in Egypt and the Demise of State Feminism," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 24, no. 2 (May, 1992): 234, accessed May 28, 2012, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/164296>

⁴⁸⁵ Altman, 2.

Islam was a way of life.”⁴⁸⁶ The men that joined the MB during their rising popularity on university campuses represent today’s MB middle generation. Moreover, like el-Halafawy and her husband, this generation of Islamic activists originally represented the core of the more active Islamic group *al-Jama‘a al-Islamiyya*.⁴⁸⁷ The eventual politicization of the MB during the Sadat years and the creation of their accommodating tactics of political bargaining and compromise, led to the moderation of the middle generation, and eventually to their resignation or expulsion from the MB during the Mubarak years.⁴⁸⁸

Drawing from al-Banna’s early vision that the rebuilding of an Islamic *ūmma* starts from inside the Muslim home, the MB turned their focus to the Muslim Sisters yet again, to work on rehabilitating the individual, the family unit and eventually the society. As a result, the Muslim Sisters went back to their original roles of assisting the MB male members behind the scenes. In a sense, the Muslim Sisters Division adopted the MB’s accommodationist attitude by helping their male counterpart, in favour of their own aspirations to take a more political and public role in Egyptian politics; similar to the MB’s attitude towards operating under the watchful gaze of the Sadat and Mubarak governments. The Sadat era, according to Badran, included the second Islamist wave, where all the advantages that women had accessed during Nasser’s reign - especially in regards to their presence in the workplace - began to diminish, as more women

⁴⁸⁶ Roula Khalaf, “A Sisterhood in Egypt,” *Gulf Times*, November 15, 2012, accessed November 17, 2012, <http://gulfnews.com/about-gulf-news/al-nisr-portfolio/weekend-review/a-sisterhood-in-egypt-1.1105349>

⁴⁸⁷ Holger Albrecht, “The Nature of Political Participation.” In *Participation on the Middle East*, edited by Ellen Lust-Okar, and Salous Zerhouni (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc. 2008), 133.

133.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

were attracted to the appeal of the growing Islamist trend; and were reassigned to the home.⁴⁸⁹ The Muslim Sisters started to cement the curriculum, set by the MB, into their daily routine with regards to the MB's educational programme for young MB children, as well as the informative guides for Sisters which were created to achieve a true Muslim home for their husbands and children.⁴⁹⁰ Moreover, with the Islamist trend came a new frame of reference and social discourse that led to the rise of the 'mosque movement'. Moghadam explained that the 1970s in the Middle East and Egypt witnessed the replacement of the secular frame of reference by an Islamist one where "the mosque movement emerged . . . in response to the perception that religious knowledge, as a means for organizing daily conduct, had become marginalized under modern structures of secular governance."⁴⁹¹ With the MB expanding their popularity base, a parallel universe began to thrive in Egypt. Wickham described it as a "parallel Islamic sector...that include[d] private mosques, Islamic voluntary associations, and Islamic businesses."⁴⁹²

As the women temporarily disappeared into their homes taking over gender-suitable roles of education and *da'wa*, the men were occupied with re-entering Egypt's public and political space, a feat now made possible through Sadat's tactic of encouraging greater political freedom than his predecessor.⁴⁹³ Professional syndicates were overtaken with a large number of MB members, and their presence was felt in major public universities such as Cairo University

⁴⁸⁹ Badran (2009), 141.

⁴⁹⁰ Moghadam (2003), 173.

⁴⁹¹ Mahmood (2005), 44.

⁴⁹² Wickham (2002), 97.

⁴⁹³ Zollner 48-49 and al-Awadi (2004), 39.

and Ain Shams University. In effect, the women activists of the Nasser era retreated into a 'period of hibernation.'⁴⁹⁴ The continued absence of a structure or plan of the Sisters discouraged any ideas of joining the MB men in reconstructing the organization through more visible roles. Instead, the roles of women within the MB were reduced to the occasional individual effort prompted only by one of the Muslim Sisters.⁴⁹⁵ Overall, the Muslim Sisters were engaged in areas concerning education, where MB female university students supported MB male members running for Student Union positions, and at the same time, disseminated the MB's message and vision of an Islamic society.

The 1970s and 1980s saw the rising trend of re-veiling on university grounds and on Egypt's streets - an expression of religious identity and a political statement - against the secular hold of the Sadat and Mubarak governments. The return of the veil also highlighted the growing popularity of the MB organization and its socially active Muslim Sisters Division.⁴⁹⁶ As the MB's services grew more popular on university campuses, they began to recruit and organize the Muslim Sisters' roles to better provide the MB's useful services to young MB students such as free transportation, lecture notes and medical care.⁴⁹⁷ Expectedly, the leaders of those teams of Muslim Sisters were always men. Such measures were justified by their belief that the MB male members were more knowledgeable about Islam than women.⁴⁹⁸ As the MB's influences infiltrated academic

⁴⁹⁴ Abdel-Latif, 5.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁶ Asef Bayat, *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 138.

⁴⁹⁷ Hatem (1992), 5.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid and Alia'a Redah Rafee, "The Student's Islamic Movement: A Study of the Veil (the Hijab)" (MA thesis, the American University in Cairo, 1983), 99.

campuses, their teachings began to spread out to Egypt's streets. People altered their everyday mannerisms, such as greetings, dress code and artistic tastes in regards to film, art and music, to something more acceptable for an Islamic way of living.⁴⁹⁹

Women's Descriptive Representation and the Quota System in Egypt's Parliament

Even though the Muslim Sisters were still absent from the political scene until the 2000 elections, the number of women who gained seats in the 1979 elections as opposed to the 1987 elections, is indicative of the level of support women received when running for parliamentary or governmental roles. The 1979 elections saw the highest number of women in Parliament in Egypt's history at nine percent of the total number of representatives.⁵⁰⁰ In 1984, women gained 36 seats (8.25 percent) due to Sadat's law requiring the presence of one female candidate on each list for all 31 constituencies.⁵⁰¹ Soon after the assassination of Sadat, in 1985, the quota system that reserved seats for women in both the People's Assembly and Legislative Assembly was declared unconstitutional.⁵⁰²

With the dissolution of Sadat's favourable law to female representation and with the introduction of a new system of mixed elections in 1986,⁵⁰³ only

⁴⁹⁹ Bayat, 138.

⁵⁰⁰ El-Adly, 45.

⁵⁰¹ Hatem (1992), 246 and el-Adly, 44.

⁵⁰² Please refer to Appendix C for information on the number of female parliamentarians from 1976 – 2005.

⁵⁰³ Law 188/1986 established a system of mixed election comprised of proportionate party list and election on the basis of individual nomination. Al-Adly explains that parties included a few women nominees in their list even with the advantage of proportionate party list of nomination, which was in favour of women nomination. El-Adly, 45.

eighteen women succeeded in the 1987 elections, bringing down the percentage of women in Parliament to 3.9 percent. Hatem described such results as a negative impression of Mubarak's new rule and his NDP, showing a decline of female nominees within the all-powerful party.⁵⁰⁴ Women did not fare well either in the 1990 elections, occupying only fifteen out of 600 seats.⁵⁰⁵ The percentage of female representation dropped to 2.2 percent in 1990, and to 1.6 percent in the 1995 elections.⁵⁰⁶

During the 1995 elections campaign, eighty-seven women filed for candidacy as independents, not as candidates of a political party.⁵⁰⁷ Only ten women succeeded, but as a result of the events that took place during the elections, the government was pressured by the public to allow a runoff election, where only eight women were elected.⁵⁰⁸ In addition, as a reaction to seeing women occupying parliamentary positions in Egypt, the first half of Mubarak's presidency was subjected to a growing Islamist opposition to women in politics. According to Sorenson, the opposition viewed it as "Coptic efforts to mobilize women and partly due to the reform efforts of Jihan Sadat...whom many Islamists regarded as a heretic."⁵⁰⁹

⁵⁰⁴ Hatem (1992), 246.

⁵⁰⁵ El-Adly, 45.

⁵⁰⁶ Refer to Appendix C and Hatem, 246.

⁵⁰⁷ Negad Al-Bora'ei, (ed) "Al Mar'aa wal Intikhabat: Qira'a lil Waqī' wa Istishraq al Mustaqbal," [Women and Parliamentary Elections: A Reading of the Reality and Future Prospects] (Working papers of the First International Conference of the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights, Cairo, 2002), 55.

⁵⁰⁸ Fernea, 278.

⁵⁰⁹ Islamists held a negative opinion of the Coptic community and harboured deep feelings of mistrust towards that segment of society, accusing them of trying to secularize Egyptian society and impede the establishment of a Muslim society within an Islamic state. Soage and Franganillo, 46 and David S. Sorenson, "The Dynamics of Political Dissent in Egypt," *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 27, no.2 (Summer/Fall 2003), 214.

Female political participation originating from the MB cadres was nearly impossible to document during the Nasser era, due to the banned status of the organization. Instead, the Muslim Sisters were occupied with their *da'wa* movement and in assisting the MB male members. Even al-Ghazali's activities prior to her arrest could be described as complementary to that of the MB's roles and responsibilities as leaders of the Islamist organization. However, the Muslim Sisters were able to show their skills and strength in the absence of the MB male members by pooling their available resources and mobilizing people to provide financial assistance to MB families. The Nasser era witnessed the beginnings of the Muslim Sisters' social and political participation, which ultimately gave way to other activities on university campuses as well as in educational institutions and professional syndicates during the Sadat and Mubarak years. The Muslim Sisters' activities during the Sadat era were mostly restricted to *da'wa* activities, as the MB took the decision to engage the government for the first time through electoral activities and fielding male candidates. Electioneering⁵¹⁰ for the MB was still an uncharted territory during the Sadat years, which is why issues such as female representation did not register as a priority in the campaigning activities under the Sadat regime. The Muslim Sisters' practice of 'accommodating' may prove effective in the long term as it is assisting them in gaining the necessary tools to negotiate a greater range of freedom from within

⁵¹⁰ Electioneering in its most general sense entails active campaigning on behalf of a candidate or a political party running in elections. Due to the MB's inability to form a party, its members campaigned and engaged the public on behalf of its MB nominees who ran as independent candidates, or as part of other legally- established political parties.

the unbending structure of a patriarchal society and its traditions.⁵¹¹ In the meantime, with their experience in electoral campaigns and running as candidates for the MB, the Muslim Sisters continue to focus on their religious activities that almost always happen amongst other women and other Muslim Sisters. This can, in fact, give way to the formation of their own collection of 'sub-societies', which can enhance the Muslim Sisters' position in negotiating with the male members of the MB.⁵¹² However, the segregation of the sexes as seen between the MB and the Muslim Sisters Division may also hinder the women from ever occupying leadership positions of any sort.

The tense relationship that existed between the MB and the Mubarak regime in particular (due to the MB's participation in the elections) gave rise to what has been described by Noha Antar as a "mutual fear reflex."⁵¹³ This reflex required the MB, in the past, to adopt a strategy of secrecy that prevented them from executing any of their activities in a transparent manner due to security reasons. At the same time, incidents of violence increased amongst other party supporters and constituents in the street, due to the feelings of resentment and lack of faith in any party's ability to fully engage the regime as opposition parties.⁵¹⁴

Under the previous regimes, when MB members were repeatedly harassed and arrested, the Sisters were responsible for ensuring that the work

⁵¹¹ Marcotte, 62.

⁵¹² Duval, 47.

⁵¹³ Antar, 4.

⁵¹⁴ Amr el-Chobaky, "Al Mar'a wal Ahzab al Masryia: Mushkilat al Tamthil wal Musharaka al Siyasiya," [Women and Egyptian political Parties: the Problems of Representation and Political Participation] in *Halet al Mar'aa fi Misr: Dirasa fi mustwayat al tamthil bil manasib al qiyadiya*, [Women's Status in Egypt: A Study of the Levels of Representation in Leadership Positions] ed. Amani Al-Tawil (Cairo: Centre for Political and Strategic Studies, 2009), 136.

and mission of the MB continued to exist and thrive under an authoritarian governmental power. Continuous arrests of MB members and violence in Egypt's streets further discouraged women from participating in elections altogether. At the same time, a small number of women rose to the occasion when the MB decided to field female candidates in 2000-2010 elections. However, the barring of women from senior and more public positions within the MB, as a survival tactic used by the MB for years, may no longer be applicable in the post-January 25 era in Egypt.

CHAPTER FIVE The Muslim Sisters and the 18-Day Revolution

The obvious vote rigging and the absence of any democratic principles and governance in the 2010 elections were the ‘straws that broke the camel’s back’.⁵¹⁵ The 420 seats allocated to the NDP – out of 518 People’s Assembly seats – have been viewed by some as a sure way for the NDP to overtake any future opposition, a tactic which Sadiki argues was “either a sixth term for Mubarak senior or a first term for Mubarak junior.”⁵¹⁶ The suppression of all opposing voices of the authoritarian regime was more than the Egyptian people could bear. In particular, it was the Egyptian youth that could no longer accept the status quo that maintained the economic deterioration of their country and the rising inflation and unemployment rates.⁵¹⁷ The Egyptian youth had watched their parents struggle under the injustices of the corrupt government for years, and saw an inevitable repeat of their parents’ oppressed rights and freedoms, as more graduates entered the market only to lead a life of unemployment in Egypt’s current economy. Over the past couple of years, Egypt’s economy has slowly improved, but this improvement did not trickle down to the masses. Corruptive habits persisted as profits were enjoyed mostly by the wealthy elite

⁵¹⁵ Refer to Chapter Eight.

⁵¹⁶ Larbi Sadiki, “Inception: Dreams of Revolution,” *Al-Jazeera English*, February 2, 2011, accessed March 15, 2011,

<http://english.aljazeera.net/indepth/opinion/2011/02/2011228022611887.html>

⁵¹⁷ Richard Falk, “Egypt’s Berlin Wall Moment,” *Al-Jazeera English*, February 8, 2011, accessed April 20, 2011, <http://english.aljazeera.net/indepth/opinion/2011/02/20112795229925377.html>

while the rising rates of inflation were mostly felt by the lower to middle income families.⁵¹⁸

The Beginnings of a People's Protest: The January 25 Revolution

The movement that started as a small protest initiated by a frenzy of Internet activity, and exploded into a full-fledged revolution, was a youth movement. The sight of Tahrir Square filled to maximum capacity, with both men and women from different backgrounds and social classes united for one common purpose, was a sight that most Egyptians never thought would ever take place. These 18 days brought together different political currents for the purpose of building a better Egypt, a country where democracy can finally take root after decades of corruption and authoritarianism weeding its way into every Egyptian household. The impression was that when people left their homes and camped out in Tahrir Square during the 18 days, they were joining the uprising as Egyptians, and not as liberals or Islamists or leftists, and most definitely not as representative of any particular gender. It was believed that women of different backgrounds and religions had a common goal: to see Mubarak leave and give back to all Egyptians their will to choose. Niqab-wearing conservatives were part of a cohesive entity alongside liberal and secular Egyptian women.⁵¹⁹ The revolution was a demonstration of human will and the desire to achieve

⁵¹⁸ Chérine Chams El Dine, "Egypt's 25th January: A Revolution and its Roots," *The Montréal Review* (March 2011), accessed June 1, 2011, <http://www.themontrealreview.com/2009/Egypt-25th-January-a-revolution-and-its-roots.php>

⁵¹⁹ Rana Moussaoui, "A Woman's Touch in the Arab Spring," *AFP for YahooNews.com*, December 25, 2011, accessed December 29, 2011, <http://en-maktoob.news.yahoo.com/womans-touch-arab-spring-235941462.html>

something bigger and more important that transcends the different divisions that existed between people. Furthermore, the high participation of women – who during the Mubarak regime had experienced limited involvement in politics and politically infused situations – was quite memorable during those 18 days of the revolution.

The Presence and Numbers of the MB

Initially, the MB was aware of the plans of the protest and it had been decided that the MB is not to take part.⁵²⁰ But as the days passed and the situation in Tahrir Square became more dramatic, the protest movement started to take on a whole new persona of nationalistic anger and indignation directed at a failed government regardless of people's different affiliations. The protestors emanated from all classes, educational backgrounds and from all walks of life. When the MB later decided to join demonstrators in Tahrir, they did so as Egyptians and not as a socio-religious movement. The goal of the revolution was clear: to regain the dignity and rights of the Egyptian people. According to Essam el-Erian, the MB was careful not to give religious characteristics to the revolution whenever members of the MB were allowed (by the General Guide's office) to join in the protests without pushing the MB's agenda or chanting any of its Islamist slogans.⁵²¹ In addition, the MB received several threats by state security

⁵²⁰ "Interview with Heba Morayef," *PBS Frontline Series*, February 22, 2011, accessed February 26, 2011, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/revolution-in-cairo/interviews/heba-morayef.html>

⁵²¹ There is some degree of speculation as to why the MB chose not to distinguish themselves from the rest of the people in Tahrir Square. MB members said it was because the 18-day

forces to stay away from the rising protests, to avoid the arrest of their General Guide Mohammed Badie.⁵²² Nonetheless, their presence was felt as the days passed in Tahrir Square, especially when security issues became a serious concern. Amr Hamzawy noticed that those who stood at the security checkpoints at Tahrir Square were Muslim Brothers, ensuring the safety of the Square's inhabitants. They were also responsible for providing tents, blankets and tea for people who chose to stay in the Square until Mubarak stepped down.⁵²³ The MB was taking an active role in the revolution, but only to provide their greatest asset: their organizational and mobilizing strengths.

A Muslim Sister recounted her experience before those days were defined as a revolution. She had left her home the day of January 25 with her daughter and other Muslim Sisters to join one of the many protests the MB were known to stage, not understanding that they would soon be swept into an even bigger protest movement. She recalled that as she headed towards the Supreme Court (close proximity to Tahrir Square) to demonstrate alongside other MB members:

“We did not know it was going to turn into a revolution. Whoever claims that they knew all along that this was a revolution is a liar. We arrived at the Supreme Court a little early, and we decided to go into the Journalism Syndicate building to wait for instructions

revolution was an Egyptian revolution, not defined by one political party, social movement or ideology. Other MB members attributed it to the fear that MB inclusion in the revolution will threaten the success and longevity of the revolution, if security forces chose to infiltrate the Square and target MB members, as was done in the past. There are a few voices that claim that the MB was negotiating with the SCAF behind the scenes and did not want to sabotage these talks by occupying Tahrir Square with Islamists chants. Maurice Chammah. 'Listening to the Muslim Brotherhood' *The Montréal Review* (April 2011). Accessed June 1, 2011, <http://www.themontrealreview.com/2009/Listening-to-the-Muslim-Brotherhood.php>

⁵²² Trager, "The Unbreakable Muslim Brotherhood."

⁵²³ "Interview with Amr Hamzawy," *PBS Frontline Series*, February 22, 2011, accessed March 10, 2011, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/revolution-in-cairo/interviews/amr-hamzawy.html>

from Dr. Beltaji. We then went to the Supreme Court and were met with many armored police cars and trucks. Our demonstration consisted of 16 men and four women. We had been demonstrating for almost two hours, when we realized that more people from the street were starting to join us, as the demonstration turned into one against the security forces. We shouted at them: ‘this is our land, this is our country,’ to reaffirm that we were not going anywhere. With more and more people joining our demonstration, the size and momentum of the protest eventually spilled into Tahrir Square and I - amongst others – pushed aside steel fences and barricades to make way for those behind us.”⁵²⁴

Initially, the plan laid out by the organizers for the January 25 protests was announced on Facebook and to the press a day earlier, with the time and locations of said protests. The plan included a march down side streets of downtown Cairo, to encourage more people to join and increase the size of the marches. The hope was that the magnitude of the protest flooding into the downtown area would be too big for the security forces to control.⁵²⁵ The Muslim Sisters found themselves spilling into Tahrir Square, where some MB men proceeded to the People’s Assembly building. The women stayed behind in the Square for fear that they get trapped in the narrow Mohamed Mahmoud street that lead to the People’s Assembly and where several MB members were eventually beaten including MP Amr Zaky.⁵²⁶ The use of tear gas started after four pm that day and the Sister and her daughters were caught in the line of fire.

By the end of the day, the number of protesters had exponentially increased and yet the state-owned broadcasting channels still insisted on

⁵²⁴ H. A. M, Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 24, 2012.

⁵²⁵ The Security forces were misled on the whereabouts and timings of the protests. However, there was a security presence at the time in the downtown streets of Cairo. El-Ghobashy, “The Praxis of the Egyptian Revolution.”

⁵²⁶ H. A. M, Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 24, 2012.

describing the situation as minor skirmishes of thugs.⁵²⁷ However, *al-Jazeera* and *al-Arabiya* news channels were broadcasting live at the Square, revealing a more accurate representation of the disputes between state security forces and protesters.⁵²⁸ Another Sister described the challenges present that made it difficult for people to reach the Square safely:

“I left home on the 26th and headed towards the Square via the Lawyer’s Syndicate building road. I was amongst a group of my work colleagues when we got surrounded by police that stopped us from getting through. As tear gas filled the air in the vicinity, we saw an opportunity to run past the police forces. As we made our way to the Square, and as we were passing Maspero (National Radio and Television building), we saw men capture protesters and throw them into an unmarked van. As a result, my colleagues and I opted to take refuge in *Al-Jazeera*’s office in Maspero, where we watched the events unfold.”⁵²⁹

The Square was only occupied on the 28th of January. On that day – dubbed the Day of Rage – a direct message was sent from the MB’s Guidance down the hierarchy of the MB, stating that their participation was mandatory.⁵³⁰ The MB soon joined the rest of the protesters mostly due to the pressure from the youth on the leadership.⁵³¹ MB members were instructed by their *ūsra* leader via telephone to mobilize and head towards Tahrir Square.⁵³² Still, while they encouraged their youth to participate and engage Egypt’s society of different ideologies and faiths, the MB was not participating formally in the protests.⁵³³ According to a female supporter of the MB, who was present in Tahrir Square,

⁵²⁷ H. A. M., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 24, 2012.

⁵²⁸ Ibid.

⁵²⁹ H.Z., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, February 7, 2012.

⁵³⁰ Ibid. and O.B., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 21, 2012.

⁵³¹ Trager, “The Unbreakable Muslim Brotherhood.”

⁵³² Ibid.

⁵³³ H.M., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 30, 2012 and H. A. M., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 24, 2012.

there was a directive to all MB members – on a national level – to head to Tahrir Square on February 2, 2011 – the Day of the Camel.⁵³⁴ For example, Mohamed el-Beltaji, a MB politician, rounded up almost 3,000 - 4,000 people in his stead to unite with the protesters in the Square.⁵³⁵ One of the daughters of a Muslim Sister, who was pregnant and present on the Day of the Camel, explained:

“My daughter Fadwa was walking in the Square with a camel right by her side. The Sisters and I formed a circle around her to protect her from the camels and the water hoses. Khairat al-Shater’s wife covered her with a thick blanket to keep her warm after the water hoses had drenched her. It was at this moment that we saw people coming out of side streets and buildings asking us if we needed anything. We replied that we were in need of blankets due to the cold weather.”⁵³⁶

The goals of the revolution remained unchanged and the MB still refused to join in its formal capacity. It was careful not to disrupt the diversity and cohesion of the people within the Square.⁵³⁷ Meanwhile, the MB cadres were spread out, lending a helping hand whenever they deemed necessary. They assisted in organizing rallies, providing loudspeakers and engaging the crowd without the use of Islamic rhetoric or themes of an Islamist nature.⁵³⁸ A temporary hospital was set up with the help of protestors who had medical degrees, who organized shifts to help the injured. Security checkpoints were set up all around the Square, to ensure that no acts of thuggery would taint the pure revolutionary goals. The first security checkpoint set up by the MB was at the Square’s

⁵³⁴ "Day of the Camel" or Battle of the Camel" refers to the day when men on horses and camels entered Cairo's Tahrir Square to disperse the week long sit-in calling for the ousting of President Hosni Mubarak. Protesters went head to head with Mubarak loyalists in a fight that lasted well into the next day and which left 11 dead, and over 600 injured.

N.S., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, March 25, 2012.

⁵³⁵ Ibid.

⁵³⁶ H. A. M, Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 24, 2012.

⁵³⁷ "Interview with Heba Morayef."

⁵³⁸ H.M., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 30, 2012.

entrance by Qasr al-Nil bridge when it was obvious that hired thugs armed with weapons and knives were slipping into the Square, in an attempt to scare protesters and disturb their unity. In effect, the MB directed all the MB members and people via telephone to enter through this route until they were assigned at every entry point.⁵³⁹ A MB supporter explained that when she joined the revolution on January 28 – the Day of Rage – security checkpoints were set up at every possible entry point into the Square, with a majority of those stationed at the points being MB members. Moreover, MB *shu'bas* were organized and mobilized according to a schedule to secure those entrances to Tahrir.⁵⁴⁰ At the time of setting up security checkpoints run by civilians and MB members, Muslim Sister H.A.M. and her daughters were approaching police officers trying to warn them of thugs and their plan to sabotage the protests:

“My daughter went to an officer in charge, at one of the security checkpoints at the Square, and said: ‘Can’t you see those men with knives? Don’t you know they are only here to bully people and cause trouble? He replied: ‘How would I recognize them amongst all those people?’ And when she pointed out that the thugs were armed with knives and sharp objects, pushing over carts filled with food and supplies for the protestors, her complaints were ignored. We searched for different checkpoints to enter the Square until we were directed via mobile phone to the first checkpoint manned by the MB men. When my brother-in-law chose to exit from another checkpoint with food supplies, he was shot at.”⁵⁴¹

The MB provided food, water and blankets during those cold nights in the Square. Technology-savvy youth and those with media outlets and professional expertise headed several information units within the Square, to ensure that a continuous flow of information and images were being transmitted to international

⁵³⁹ H. A. M, Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 24, 2012.

⁵⁴⁰ N.S., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, March 25, 2012.

⁵⁴¹ H. A. M, Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 24, 2012.

news agencies; even during the days when internet access was suspended and cellular phone lines were severed.⁵⁴²

The Muslim Sisters in Tahrir Square

Within each of these initiatives that flourished and supported the protest, MB members were partaking in the process to ensure its success. With the organization's extensive history in mobilizing and thriving under extreme conditions, the revolution was just another chapter in their continuous struggle against an oppressive regime. Naturally, the Muslim Sisters were part of the continuous support system that transformed Tahrir Square into an "exercise in nation-building"—as described by one activist blogger taking part in the protests.

⁵⁴³ While in the past, the Muslim Sisters were perceived as the MB's silent partners, after the revolution, they acquired a different image of active participants in the process that toppled the old government. This gave way to a more public and transparent role for the Muslim Sisters within the MB and its political party.

The history of the Muslim Sisters is one of thriving behind the scenes; quietly bustling and mobilizing to support the organization of the Muslim Brothers and its movement. However, the 18-day revolution revealed the role of the Muslim Sisters. They were responsible for ensuring the security of the Square, by

⁵⁴² H. A. M, Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 24, 2012 and Nahed Eltantawy and Julie B. Wiest, "Social Media in the Egyptian Revolution: Reconsidering Resource Mobilization Theory," *International Journal of Communication* 5 (2011):1207–1224.

⁵⁴³ Mahmoud Salem, "Tahrir: An Exercise in Nation-building," *Rantings of a Sandmonkey*, July 16, 2011, accessed July 28, 2011, <http://www.sandmonkey.org/2011/07/>.

stationing themselves at security checkpoints and patting down female entrants.⁵⁴⁴ The Sisters especially thrived in the area that they were most accustomed to: support services. They provided unremitting support to all activists in the form of food, shelter, medical supplies and aid. The Sisters even took part in helping the protestors fight against acts of thuggery, by providing ammunition in the form of rubble and blocks of stones that they carried and transported in their long, conservative pieces of clothing.⁵⁴⁵

Years of working underground as part of a large and well-organized grassroots movement provided them with a strong sense of responsibility and support towards their brothers, sons, husbands and male counterparts overall. A Muslim Sister who had been a member of the MB since 1977 portrayed the events that took place on January 25 when she was protesting with other Muslim Sisters that proved to be quite revealing of their years of oppression under Mubarak. She described how she continually pulled young boys and men away from the grasps of the police, who were trying to arrest and beat them down during the initial protest that took place not far from Tahrir Square.⁵⁴⁶ The youths she was trying to protect, were not MB affiliated, but were average Egyptian youths who shared her same vision of a future of social and democratic equality for future generations. She would grab them out of the police officers' grasps shouting 'he is my son, leave him alone!' to which the officers would reply sarcastically: 'all these young men are your sons?'⁵⁴⁷ Another Muslim Sister who

⁵⁴⁴ G.R. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 17, 2012.

⁵⁴⁵ Magdy.

⁵⁴⁶ H. A. M, Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 24, 2012.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid.

is an editor for the Al-Azhar Journal (*Sout al- Azhar*), described her daily activities during the later days of the uprising:

“I like being useful in a field or task that I excel at... so I put my skills and expertise to the best possible use. I set up several units and offices around the Square as outlets for both the protesters and news agencies to exchange information, images and general news bites; to ensure that the most comprehensive story was spread globally through the several mediums available that day. At first, I communicated via phone with people, then contacted *al-Jazeera* and other media outlets. Due to security units trying to shut down all modes of communication, I moved from location to location as soon as the phones and other communication devices were discovered and dismantled.”⁵⁴⁸

She recalled spending two days in the office of the Democratic Front Party⁵⁴⁹ dissipating valuable information to protestors such as the best methods of protecting oneself from tear gas and pressure from water hoses.⁵⁵⁰ As the revolution progressed, she set up a media centre to document and monitor activities of thugs and collect evidence against them such as the types of weapons used, and communicated with the temporary hospital unit set up in Tahrir Square to keep a log of personal information of the wounded and killed.⁵⁵¹

A majority of the Muslim Sisters did not sleep overnight in Tahrir Square opting to return home late at night and join the fight early in the morning. However, this was not the case for all Sisters. The Muslim Sister that was nominated to run in the 2010 elections, only to have her husband arrested to

⁵⁴⁸ H.Z., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, February 7, 2012.

⁵⁴⁹ The Democratic Front Party was founded by Osama al-Ghazali Harb in 2007. Harb was a former NDP member and it's categorized as a liberal party. See “Al-Gabha al-Dimuqrati (The Democratic Front Party),” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, September 20, 2011, accessed March 24, 2013, <http://egyptelections.carnegieendowment.org/2011/09/20/al-gabha-al-dimuqrati-the-democratic-front-party>

⁵⁵⁰ H.Z., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, February 7, 2012.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid.

discourage her from running;⁵⁵² could not go home the night of January 24, as the national security forces were stationed at her home in fulfilment of their directive to harass and bully her family.⁵⁵³ M.A.E. explained that:

“The MB was in a state of revolution from the 2010 elections in late November up until the days of the revolution. Security Services were in pursuit of my family and were monitoring our every move. They were stationed outside of my home from the dawn of January 24, 2011 - to ensure that we do not join any demonstrations or protests.”⁵⁵⁴

She left with her family before January 24 and did not return home until the end of the uprising. She spent the 18 days in Tahrir Square in a tent set up by her son with the sign “*Bansion al-Hurrieya*” (Freedom Inn) pinned on it. In addition, her other son engaged in information disseminating activities, as he contacted foreign press outlets through his Facebook page before the internet blackout that was imposed on January 28, 2011.⁵⁵⁵

Tahrir Square was always filled with women in large numbers, as they were given an equal footing in the face of a violent authoritarian force, and in the absence of any sexual harassment concerns. However, Nesrine Malik describes the presence of women during the 18 days as a practice of ‘tokenism’ as many viewed them as “the ultimate downtrodden victims, the sign that things are desperate, that even members of the fairer sex are leaving their hearths and

⁵⁵² Refer to Chapter Seven.

⁵⁵³ M.A.E. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, February 1, 2012.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁵ Isobel Coleman, “On How Democracy can Threaten Rights for Mideast Women,” *The Washington Post*, February 20, 2011, accessed November 10, 2011, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2011/02/18/AR2011021806962_2.html

taking to the streets.”⁵⁵⁶ One Muslim Sister made use of that representation of woman as the fairer weaker sex to co-opt men into remaining steadfast in their protests. She sat down on a pavement in Tahrir Square, one night, holding her baby, in an attempt to shame men into staying. The rationale was that if a woman with her child is staying strong in the square, then the men should stay as well.⁵⁵⁷

The January 25 Revolution: New Prospects, New Possibilities

With the January 25 revolution and the dissolution of the Mubarak regime, anything is possible for the MB. The MB organization is adamant that it portrays its party - FJP ⁵⁵⁸ - in a friendly liberal light, with its quota of female and Christian Copt members.⁵⁵⁹ After decades of oppression and intricate underground networks, the MB has emerged as the most organized collective in modern Egyptian politics.⁵⁶⁰ The year 2011 witnessed the Domino effect that led to the Arab Spring, where a chain reaction of social movements and people uprisings swept the region, and began to shape and define the new Middle East. The spark that ignited these protests across the Middle East had originated in Tunisia in 2010, with the self-immolation of a street vendor in protest of the corrupt regime

⁵⁵⁶ Nesrine Malik, “Arab Women Protesters - Not Free, Just Figureheads,” *The Guardian*, April 4, 2011, accessed June, 24, 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/apr/02/arab-women-protesters>

⁵⁵⁷ H. A. M, Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 24, 2012.

⁵⁵⁸ The FJP was founded on April 30 of 2011, and from that moment its members and the MB’s mammoth organization have been working tirelessly to fully participate in the first democratic action that was to take place in Egypt since the MB’s inception in 1928. Today, the FJP has offices throughout the country, as they have built on existing connections and relations that were established by the MB. The FJP has also created a hierarchy within the party that mirrors the meticulous defragmentation of the MB’s organizational structure.

⁵⁵⁹ Bradley Hope, “Egypt Recognises New Muslim Brotherhood Political Party,” *The National*, June 8, 2011, accessed June 11, 2011. <http://www.thenational.ae/news/worldwide/middle-east/egypt-recognises-new-muslim-brotherhood-political-party?pageCount=0>

⁵⁶⁰ Refer to the Freedom and Justice party’s 2011 party platform and official website: <http://www.fjponline.com/>

that Tunisia had endured for decades. Soon after that unforgettable incident, the Arab spring spilled over and transformed the Middle East into the focal point for the submerged Islamist factions and organizations to burst out of their hiding places, and to freely contest for their place and rights in Arab society and government. With the dominant Islamist trend, came a series of pivotal questions and concerns, in the event that some of these countries will function now with a more Islamist agenda than ever seen before. For several political analysts and academics, the Arab Spring gave way to an Islamist Autumn and even a more sombre Islamist Winter, with Arab populations giving their votes to Islamist political parties, moving towards Islamist-led governments instead of Arab governments slowly transitioning into a democratic-like system.⁵⁶¹ In the case of Egypt, the concerns circled around two main subjects: Coptic rights and women's rights.

It is evident, in light of the Muslim Sisters' personal testaments of the 18-day revolution, that they are an integral and active part of the MB organization. Within this movement, the Muslim Sisters have proven to be both a descriptive and substantive representation of Egyptian women within their organization. However, as academia furthers its study and research on the topic of women's

⁵⁶¹Rabah Ghezali, "Arab Spring, Islamist Winter?" *Huffington Post*, January 18, 2011, accessed March 22, 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rabah-ghezali/arab-spring-islamist-wint_b_1212794.html

Alexandre Najjar, "Islamist Autumn: Could Gaddafi's End, Tunisian Vote Radicalize Arab Revolution?" *Le Monde*, November 30, 2011, accessed March 22, 2013, <http://www.worldcrunch.com/islamist-autumn-could-gaddafis-end-tunisian-vote-radicalize-arab-revolution/world-affairs/islamist-autumn-could-gaddafi-s-end-tunisian-vote-radicalize-arab-revolution-/c1s4011/#.UVKk01vNhio>

and Michael J. Totten, "Arab Spring or Islamist Winter?" *World Affairs Journal* (January/February 2012), accessed March 22, 2013, <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/arab-spring-or-islamist-winter>

representation, it becomes clear that understanding the definition and implication of women's political participation is "much more complicated than counting the number of women present in a particular political institution and judging the actions of women representatives against a 'feminist' shopping list of demands."⁵⁶² With the formation of the FJP and the MB's parliamentary activities, it has become impossible to ignore the conservative element in the representation of women in politics. Childs pointed out that acknowledging the conservatives in gender politics would push the studies of women in politics to eradicate "assumptions that the substantive representation of women equals the feminist substantive representation of women.... [and] also raise the possibility of non- and anti-feminist representative claims and actions 'for' women."⁵⁶³ In the case of the Muslim Sisters, assessing their input and movement outside a parliamentary and electoral role is crucial in understanding the magnitude of their role and responsibility within an overwhelmingly patriarchal and Islamist organization. Women's representation in the rising popularity of social movement and civil society organizations further highlights the importance of studying descriptive and substantive representation outside the confinement of governments and parliaments.

With the deposing of Egypt's ruling elite and change in government direction after January 2011, an assessment of MB's activities in relation to women's issues will take place, to pinpoint differences in leadership and direction within the organization and its party, if any. The next part of this research will

⁵⁶² Celis and Childs, 213.

⁵⁶³ Ibid.

present the MB's activities and political mobilization during and after the January 25 revolution, and how it has affected the public roles of the Muslim Sisters on the street and in Egypt's People's Assembly and *Shura* Council elections. A discussion will ensue on the reality of the MB's plan for reformulating the dated structure of the MB, and the possibility of women occupying senior positions in the MB and its *Shura* Council and Guidance Bureau.

**PART II – The Electoral Activities and Participation of the Muslim Sisters as
Part of the MB and FJP**

**CHAPTER SIX: The Muslim Sisters' Political and Social Activities Prior to
Elections**

CHAPTER SEVEN: The Muslim Sisters' Activities during Egypt's Elections

CHAPTER EIGHT: The Muslim Sisters Post- Elections

CHAPTER SIX

The Muslim Sisters' Political and Social Activities Prior to Elections

As the Muslim Sisters belonged to an organization that was mostly banned since its inception, their electoral activities were severely restricted and were delegated to a small number of elections. Part I highlighted how the Muslim Sisters were an integral faction within the MB organization through their great performance in non-electoral political activities. Part II will focus on the events that led to their increase in electoral activities and participation prior to elections and during the campaigning period, as well as demonstrate their trials and tribulations during and after election season.

For Egyptian women, the victories achieved in the battle for equal rights in the first half of the 20th century can be summarised in the stipulations of the Constitution of 1923. The state affirmed women's equal civil and political rights and equal public responsibilities as men, in the right to vote that women gained during Nasser's reign in 1956 and in the stipulations of the Constitution of 1971 under Sadat. The state

“guaranteed a balance and accord between a woman's duties towards her family on the one hand and towards her work in society and her equality with man in the political, social, and cultural spheres on the other without violating the laws of the Islamic shariah.”⁵⁶⁴

The Muslim Sisters may have been active since their early beginnings and throughout the Nasser era, but there was an absence of any form of essential political participation on their part, except for al-Ghazali's experience. To this day, al-Ghazali's legacy and teachings are evident through the works of the other

⁵⁶⁴ Badran (2009), 41.

Muslim Sisters. A legal consultant - H.A.M., who worked on the campaign of a Muslim Sister's electoral candidate in 2005, 2010 and 2011, owes her activism to al-Ghazali. H.A.M. was singled out from the crowds of students during her college years due to her active background as the head of the Women's Union in the College of Law at a Cairo state university.⁵⁶⁵ It was al-Ghazali that made her join the MB at the age of seventeen, where she was mentored by al-Ghazali at her home - twice a week - alongside nine other girls. During those meetings, they watched al-Ghazali carry out everyday chores like cooking and observed her dinner table decorum. They also studied her habits in the treatment of household employees and proper etiquette. Each of these women later became a leading figure who aimed to propagate the Islamic message and the Islamic way of life.⁵⁶⁶ This active Sister believed that she is eternally indebted to al-Ghazali for having taught her the principles and methodologies of *da'wa*; in addition to her contribution to the development of interpersonal skills that are crucial in *da'wa*-related activities, without compromising her values and public image.⁵⁶⁷ Al-Ghazali was also the reason why another prominent Muslim Sister - Azza el-Garf - joined the MB aged only fifteen.⁵⁶⁸ El-Garf worked with al-Ghazali for 4-5 years throughout her time in college where she completed a BA degree in Social Work. Her academic background in Social Work assisted with al-Ghazali's desire to

⁵⁶⁵ H.A.M. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 24, 2012.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁸ For more details on Azza el-Garf's political activities refer to Chapter Ten.

apply an Islamic frame of reference to the many social issues in Egyptian society.⁵⁶⁹

The Muslim Sisters' stance within the MB is quite an ambiguous one. On the one hand, as discussed above, they have managed to prove that their skills are indispensable to the MB. On the other hand, they still accept a position that is subordinate to male leadership. The Muslim Sisters did engage in the MB's political movement before the 2000 elections, when, in 1992, Dr. Wafa Ramadan ran in the Doctors Syndicate elections in 1992 on the MB's slate.⁵⁷⁰ Yet, the Muslim Sisters do not demand greater roles in Egypt's public space. They continue, nevertheless, to be politically and socially present in impressive numbers, during election season, commanding the attention of their senior male counterparts.

The 1994 MB Document

As the MB made its way back to the center of the political arena by winning a number of seats during the 1984 and 1987 Parliamentary elections,⁵⁷¹ and with its impressive presence in professional syndicates, the MB realized that it is crucial to circulate documents that detailed their views regarding certain issues, such as women's rights and party politics. In 1994, the document that the MB published entitled "Women and Political Pluralism" included several issues pertaining to women, such as matters of ownership and financial

⁵⁶⁹ A.G. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, July 12, 2012.

⁵⁷⁰ El-Ghobashy, "The Metamorphosis Of The Egyptian Muslim Brothers," 382.

⁵⁷¹ Refer to Chapter Three.

independence.⁵⁷² That document reflected the organization's complete transformation regarding its perception of the status and role of women in an Islamic society, both in practice and in reality. It was published by Ma'moun el-Hudaybi, who was the official spokesperson of the MB at the time, before he eventually assumed the position of Deputy to the Supreme Guide.⁵⁷³ The document laid out the MB's beliefs regarding a woman's right to occupy positions in public office and government and her right as a voter. Expectedly, the positions that women were permitted to occupy excluded that of the highest position in a state or Islamic *ūmma*; also known as *al-Imama al-kubra* or the position of the caliphate.⁵⁷⁴ The MB wanted to clearly assert there was nothing in *sharia* law that would conflict with a woman's right to vote and run for Parliament.

Many believed that the 1994 document was published as an introductory step to the MB's plan to field a female candidate during the upcoming 2000 elections.⁵⁷⁵ However, MB expert and analyst Abdel-Raheem Ali stressed that the document provided extensive details on women's issues and their roles as voters, yet it did not delve too much into a women's vital role as a candidate.⁵⁷⁶ The document demonstrated how women's rights issues necessitate a reinterpretation of some *Quranic* verses, in an attempt to break away from the

⁵⁷² Abdel-Latif and Ottaway, 8.

⁵⁷³ A.R.A. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 30, 2012.

⁵⁷⁴ This is a contentious issue, as the phrase '*al-Imama al-Kubra*' refers to the caliph who rules over an Islamic *ūmma* and who leads his nation in prayer. The phase of the Caliphate historically covered most of the Middle East region. Seeing that it is still not acceptable for a woman to lead men in prayer, some theologians use this as a valid reason why women cannot occupy the position of *al-imama al kubra*. However, the position of President as opposed to *al-imama* does not include leading people in prayer. While the MB states that neither a woman nor a Copt can occupy the position of a caliph, the position of President is still a grey area. Abdel-Latif and Ottaway, 1.

⁵⁷⁵ El-Ghobashy, "The Metamorphosis of The Egyptian Muslim Brothers," 383.

⁵⁷⁶ A.R.A. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 30, 2012.

Old Guide's traditionalist views.⁵⁷⁷ Still, the document contained a chapter that focused on the Western model of women's liberation. It described that model as one "based on a decadent philosophy that goes in contradiction with *Sharia* principles," a statement that reflected the dominant outlook amongst a large segment of female Islamic activists.⁵⁷⁸ The 1994 document succeeded in what it set out to do: market the MB as an organization that does not stand against a woman's God-given rights stated in *sharia* law. However, there was no mention of the Muslim Sisters in regards to their status and function inside the MB organization. Moreover, it did not expunge statements made by the older generation in regards to women's role in society. For example, the former General Guide Omar el-Tilmisani reaffirmed his long-held view against equal rights, opting for a more acceptable complementarity role between genders:

"I do not like to talk about women. Modern people may find this shameful, or cowardly, but I want nothing to do with modern theories and the equality of men and women. I still believe that a man is a man and a woman is a woman and that's why God created her. A woman who believes that she is equal to a man is a woman who has lost her femininity, virtue and dignity."⁵⁷⁹

The MB did not come to its decision to field a female candidate quite so easily. First came the 1994 document, followed by the task of picking the right person to represent the organization. In addition to their desire to present the MB as a more tolerant and democratic organization, the MB estimated that a female candidate would minimize the acts of strong-arming that the government was

⁵⁷⁷ Such Quranic verses include 4:34, where it specifies men's responsibility to provide financial support and their intellectual authority over women, it is argued that the verse applies to household relations only and does not extend to the workplace or the public. El-Ghobashy, "The Metamorphosis of The Egyptian Muslim Brothers," 382.

⁵⁷⁸ Abdel-Latif and Ottaway, 8.

⁵⁷⁹ El-Ghobashy, "The Metamorphosis of The Egyptian Muslim Brothers," 382.

known to apply on the MB prior to and during previous election periods.⁵⁸⁰ Ironically, and as mentioned before, avoiding this potential violence against the Muslim Sisters was the same reason the MB used during the 1984, 1987 and 1995 elections.⁵⁸¹ In effect, the MB hoped that including the women in elections would ensure that they do not face the same security clampdowns they endured in the past.⁵⁸² Several male candidates were already arrested during the campaigning period prior to the 2000 elections.⁵⁸³ Furthermore, due to the MB's long history of arrests; many of the MB's public personalities were imprisoned at least once, thus affecting their public appeal and popularity. The MB needed new faces and representatives who did not have a grim history with the state's security forces. Thirty years after the first series of arrests of Muslim Sisters, the MB decided that women could finally assume a more public role.⁵⁸⁴

Campaigning Activities and Methods

The 2000 Elections - Placing a female candidate within the MB cadres was not received warmly at first, as several Salafi-oriented MB members and other conservative members were against it, stating that the situation was still too 'premature' to allow women to run for seats.⁵⁸⁵ Nevertheless, the MB's Guidance Bureau went ahead with its plans, selecting Jihan el-Halafawy as the candidate

⁵⁸⁰ Blaydes and el-Tarouty, 374-379.

⁵⁸¹ A.Z. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, February 5, 2012, and M.M.A Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 15, 2012.

⁵⁸² Abdel-Latif, 16.

⁵⁸³ Ibid. and Noha Antar, "The Muslim Brotherhood's Success in the Legislative Elections in Egypt 2005: Reasons and Implications," *Euromesco Paper* (October 2006), 51.

⁵⁸⁴ J.H. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, February 6, 2012.

⁵⁸⁵ Abdel-Latif, 16.

in Alexandria. El-Halafawy described the mood of political upheaval that soon followed the announcement of her candidacy: “When I ran, the world was turned upside down, within the Brotherhood but also within the regime... It was a big crisis for the regime, which was saying that the Brotherhood was a backward organisation.”⁵⁸⁶ Ali Abdel-Fattah, a MB’s spokesperson described that decision as a “practical application of the fact that women are half of the society.”⁵⁸⁷ Abdel-Latif explains that the idea of a MB female candidate was devised by two MB members from the Alexandria division: Dr. Ibrahim el-Zaafarani (el-Halafawy’s husband) and Abdel-Fattah.⁵⁸⁸ The international community may have been surprised to see a woman represent the MB’s male-dominated political candidates, but several older members of the MB were not.⁵⁸⁹ El-Halafawy belonged to the politically active middle-generation of the MB that spearheaded the movements of re-entering Egyptian society and the application of the accommodationist tactic in regards to the government. In addition, el-Halafawy was married to one of the Muslim Brothers’ leading architects of MB’s electoral strategy. Both el-Halafawy and her husband have been members of the MB since 1983.⁵⁹⁰ Originally, both belonged to another Islamist organization in the late 1970s; *Al-Jama’á al-Islamiyya*, which was the only outlet for a social Islamist movement at that time; as most of the MB’s senior members were in prison.⁵⁹¹

⁵⁸⁶ Khalaf.

⁵⁸⁷ An Associated Press report posted in the Boston Globe on August 21, 2000 in Piscatori, 49.

⁵⁸⁸ Abdel-Latif, 16.

⁵⁸⁹ El-Ghobashy, “The Metamorphosis Of The Egyptian Muslim Brothers,” 383.

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid., 383.

⁵⁹¹ J.H. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, February 6, 2012.

El-Halafawy's history is a further indication of her dedication to a life of Islamist activism in Egypt:

"I had the support and approval of my husband. He worked with me during the election as my campaign manager, as he had plenty of experience with electoral campaigning and with the government's security forces. He ran in elections three times before and was the Chairman of Alexandria's Doctors Syndicate. However, due to his previous arrests and three prison terms during past elections; he was not eligible to run in the 2000 elections."⁵⁹²

This information gave rise to speculations that el-Halafawy was running in his stead. El-Halafawy holds a Bachelors degree of Art (BA) in Finance, and a MA degree in Theology from al-Ahzar University, as well as a diploma in Political and Diplomatic Studies from the School of Commerce. Consequently, the MB believed el-Halafawi's credentials made her more qualified than any other potential candidate from the Muslims Sisters Division.⁵⁹³ However, the mother of six was a homemaker for almost twenty years prior to the elections, which limited her exposure to any political activities.⁵⁹⁴ Still, el-Halafawy and her husband's ideologies were in line with that of the MB's middle generation's more politically active and flexible ideologies. El-Halafawy was eager to reflect the MB's progressive views regarding women's participation in elections as voters and candidates; in keeping with the MB's 1994 document. El-Halafawy explained that she wanted to run:

"to make use of the opportunity presented by the state's desire to integrate women into the political process, and to clarify that Islam

⁵⁹² J.H. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, February 6, 2012.

⁵⁹³ However, she professed during her interview that she was unsure of her qualifications to run, believing that there were more commanding female personalities in the Muslim Sisters Division. J.H. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, February 6, 2012.

⁵⁹⁴ El-Ghobashy, "The Metamorphosis of The Egyptian Muslim Brothers," 373.

does not compromise women's rights... Women are very active in the [Muslim Brotherhood], though perhaps not visible. Remember that women voters are responsible for the success of the seventeen Ikhwan members of Parliament."⁵⁹⁵

The MB readied itself and took the necessary steps towards fielding its first female candidate in the 2000 elections with the publication of the 1994 documents on women's rights, as the organization repositioned its views regarding the contentious issue of women's rights and their place within society, to better complement its evolving politicized image.⁵⁹⁶ According to one male MB member, the lack of female candidates in the elections in which the MB competed in 1984, 1987, and 1995 was due to two main reasons: 1- the lack of experience of the MB male members in regards to the electoral process in the 1984 elections, which revealed the lack of competent cadres to represent the MB in Parliament and, 2- the security clampdown and continuous arrests to which the MB members were subjected, as seen in the days leading up to the 1995 elections.⁵⁹⁷

The 2000 elections marked the year the MB attempted to counter the accusations levelled at them for being traditionalist and undemocratic, by nominating Jihan el-Halafawy as their candidate in the el-Raml district of Alexandria. Nevertheless, after the challenges set forth by the government during el-Halafawy's campaign activities, the representation of women in the arliament of 2000 reached only 2.5 percent (four women), marking a decrease from the

⁵⁹⁵ El-Ghobashy, "The Metamorphosis of The Egyptian Muslim Brothers," 373.

⁵⁹⁶ Abdel-Latif, 16.

⁵⁹⁷ Linjakumpu, 101 and al-Awadi, 171.

previous elections.⁵⁹⁸ Such results also highlighted the fact that there was a significant problem regarding female representation in all political parties; as independent candidates and eventually as parliamentarians. The NDP had six women nominees out of 444 candidates. Meanwhile, the 22 opposition parties nominated seven women out of 222 candidates. For example, the el-Ghad and el-Karama parties each nominated three women. The rest of the female candidates – 111 women – ran as independents.⁵⁹⁹ However, a woman from the NDP party list (i.e. did not run as an independent) was awarded the position of second deputy speaker in the 2000 parliament.⁶⁰⁰ Additionally, it did not help Egypt's electoral process that a large majority of the population did not participate in the voting process, as they viewed it in its entirety as fraudulent. The opposition parties had no real staying power - due to the restrictive Mubarak's 1983 Electoral Law - and were seen as nothing more than decorative ornaments to the false construct of party pluralism and democratic practices.⁶⁰¹

That same year saw the formation of the National Council for Women (NCW) headed by the First Lady Suzanne Mubarak. The NCW aimed to improve the status of women and promote their political presence. The Council was made up of governmental and non-governmental organizations that focused on the following: providing empowering political skills for women nominees, the creation of an environment supportive of political participation of women, and included

⁵⁹⁸ el-Adly, 45.

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid., 50.

⁶⁰⁰ Gamal Abdel Nasser, "Political Change in Egypt: The Parliamentary Elections of 2000 and Horizons of Reform," *SWP-Studies* (July 2001): 15.

⁶⁰¹ The Law imposed many restrictions on parties such as requirements to secure eight percent of the vote if they were to be represented in Parliament and to submit a second reserve candidate list when requested. Refer to al-Awadi, 78-79 and A.G. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, July 12, 2012.

projects in advocating political participation.⁶⁰² However, the one function of the NCW that drew the wrath of the MB and other Islamists was its research efforts in pinpointing the effective ways of studying existing problems women face within 'social and family contexts.'⁶⁰³ The existence of such an entity is pivotal in gaining a better understanding of the MB's and the Islamists' dislike of several amended laws. These laws directly affected women's rights and were passed under the supervision and approval of the former First Lady and her many initiatives that have been branded as a tool to encourage the growth of Western feminist ideals on Egyptian soil.⁶⁰⁴ The MB opposed the NCW activities, but due to their banned status, they were unable to actively oppose or promote a public show of opposition to Suzanne Mubarak's women's initiative or the NCW's roles in changing the personal status laws of Egypt. The rejection of laws passed in the presence of Suzanne Mubarak - meant to protect women and children - have been lumped in with the MB's campaign against the influences of the old regime, and the 'invisible hand' that is systematically trying to destroy the advances gained during the post-revolution era. In effect, a war has been launched against the 'Suzanne Mubarak' laws, and her NCW association - irrespective of whether or not these laws already exist or not – which touched upon issues of FGM, divorce, and custody rights; laws that were beneficial to Egyptian women. Some activists credit the NCW for launching and supporting a range of initiatives to tackle women's human rights, including the campaign to fight against practices of

⁶⁰² Christina Jones-pauly, and Abir Dajani Tuqan, *Women under Islam: Gender, Justice and the Politics of Islamic Law* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2011), 194 and al-Adly, 46-49.

⁶⁰³ Jones-pauly, and Tuqan, 194.

⁶⁰⁴ Sorenson, 214.

FGM, sex trafficking and domestic violence.⁶⁰⁵ According to a researcher at the Human Rights Watch, the MB was against the government's move to criminalize female genital mutilation (FGM).⁶⁰⁶ The MB were not entirely opposed to the practice of FGM, but believed that it should be up to each individual family whether or not to administer such procedures. Similarly, the MB was also against setting a legal age of marriage for children in 2008, which they saw as the government's attempt to interfere in personal and private matters of families.⁶⁰⁷ The formation of the NCW under the direction of Suzanne Mubarak for the purpose of educating future candidates in the electoral process, further convinced MB candidates such as A.G. that

“women who did not belong to an Islamist agenda or organization were given the tools necessary to win, irrespective of whether or not they possessed the necessary qualifications such as experience and a relevant knowledge base of Egypt's electoral and governmental systems.”⁶⁰⁸

The reactions of the Muslim Sisters, and the MB overall, to the NCW illuminate the stark difference between the Muslim Sisters' representation in politics and that of female politicians and activities belonging to secular entities. Moreover, due to the NCW's prevalence in Egypt's gender politics, the NCW's role in affecting state laws has been a source of debate, and has been the focus of the MB's FJP in regards to writing up their mission statement and party principles.⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁵ “What the Women Say.”

⁶⁰⁶ H.M., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 30, 2012.

⁶⁰⁷ “Women and the Arab Spring: Taking their Place?” *The International Federation for Human Rights* (March 2012): 21.

⁶⁰⁸ A.G. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, July 12, 2012.

⁶⁰⁹ Refer to FJP Party Platform below.

The 2005 Elections - According to one Brotherhood leader, three factors led to the MB's success in the 2005 elections: "preparation, planning, and reliance on highly qualified and competent activists."⁶¹⁰ The preparations for the 2005 elections began more than a year in advance as the MB carefully studied the sociopolitical maps of the constituencies.⁶¹¹ Moreover, the MB prepared three tiers of electoral candidates in the event that the government engaged in its usual targeted arrests. Even though Mubarak's security apparatus was aware of the candidates that comprised the first and second tiers, they were generally not privy to the third layer's names.⁶¹² The 2005 elections was a great presentation of the MB's popularity and campaigning skills before the January 25 revolution. With 88 seats in Egypt's Parliament, the MB succeeded in presenting a true threat to the Mubarak regime. Still, the MB managed to field only one female candidate by the name of Makarim el-Deiry, a widow whose husband - Ibrahim Sharaf - was a former assistant to the MB's Supreme Guide and was also jailed from 1965 to 1974.⁶¹³ El-Halafawy chose not to run in this round of elections due to family obligations, and explained that her experience in the 2000 elections might have been why the MB had only one Muslim Sister running in the 2005 election.⁶¹⁴ Originally, the MB had planned to field between 14-21 women on their list. However, in light of the constraints put forth by security officials, and in the midst of opposing sentiments and reactions from the female candidates'

⁶¹⁰ Amira Howeidy, "Lessons learned," *Al-Ahram Weekly*, December 1-7, 2005, accessed October 23, 2012, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2005/771/eg8.htm>

⁶¹¹ Nabil Abdel-Fattah, "How the Brotherhood Won," *Al-Ahram Weekly*, December 29, 2005–January 4, 2006, accessed October 23, 2012, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2005/775/op211.htm>

⁶¹² 'Ali al-Din Hilal Interview by Lisa Blyades in Blyades, 207.

⁶¹³ H.A.M. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 24, 2012.

⁶¹⁴ J.H. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, February 6, 2012.

family members, the MB reduced their candidates to just one woman who was to run in Cairo.⁶¹⁵

Before the 2005 elections, the MB fully utilized the many benefits of its female members by organizing a campaign for the Muslim Sisters to encourage women to vote. Mekarim el-Deiry and Jihan el-Halafawy headed the campaign to encourage women to exercise their right to vote for the person or organization that they deemed fit, to represent them in Parliament. Of the many responsibilities delegated to the Muslim Sisters, the most important included the distribution of voting cards amongst MB members and voters, and the collection of the lists of registered voters in each constituency, for the purpose of screening them for possible errors or fraud.⁶¹⁶ Moreover, young Muslim Sisters went door-to-door lobbying for votes in the districts that the MB were known to run, such as el-Deiry's Madinat Nasr and el-Halafawy's el-Raml district. According to Abdel-Latif, women in el-Deiry's campaign were a lot more visible than in el-Halafawy's campaign as el-Deiry's campaign manager - Manal Aboul-Hassan - worked with a team of young women who were mostly recent university graduates and more politically active. Expectedly, el-Deiry's campaign platform focused on 'women-friendly' topics regarding social services and issues related to women, such as children's rights, family, and education.⁶¹⁷ El-Deiry and her campaign team - which included the female legal consultant who also participated in the 2010

⁶¹⁵ Abdel-Latif, 17.

⁶¹⁶ During the Mubarak era, it was common practice to use names of deceased persons or Egyptians who no longer live in Egypt for the purpose of increasing votes and adding to the existing number of voters. The Muslim Sisters would go to the police stations, gather the lists and proceed with crossing out the names of voters who had died or relocated to another constituency. Ibid.

⁶¹⁷ Ibid., 18.

elections - were responsible for several gatherings in the streets that included electoral speeches and public prayers, under the watchful eye of security forces.⁶¹⁸ Muslim Sister, Nermin Hassan, described the Sisters' campaigning efforts and their first all-women rally in 2005:

“When men saw what we could accomplish in elections, they started to change the way they look at us... the men were giving us instructions all the time, telling us not to lose our temper, not to appear too emotional. But then they were impressed - the Sisters carried their children with them and marched, and we were clever in how we dealt with the street, we didn't even disrupt traffic.”⁶¹⁹

The MB spokesperson, Essam el-Erian, boasted during a 2005 press interview, that the MB had an “army of 25,000 volunteers who knock on doors urging people to vote for Brotherhood candidates, produce election songs, set up Brotherhood websites [and] send out mass e-mails.”⁶²⁰ Furthermore el-Erian, asserted that women were the most important facet of this volunteer work, due to their ability to recruit more volunteers and supporters amongst their ‘sub-societies’ of women.⁶²¹ Due to the fluidity of the Muslim Sisters’ movement whether in the privacy of homes, mosques, clubs or university campuses, the Sisters had a better opportunity to garner support. MB male members are usually placed under surveillance and they were unable to execute their roles ‘under-the-radar’ as efficiently as the Muslim Sisters. In addition, many in the MB believe that the larger the presence of women in campaigning events or polling stations, the less likely it is that violent incidents will occur. According to a few accounts, the women of the MB – both members of the Division and supporters - were

⁶¹⁸ Abdel-Latif, 17-18.

⁶¹⁹ Khalaf.

⁶²⁰ Blaydes and el-Tarouty, 374.

⁶²¹ Ibid.

deployed by the MB during election time, in attempts to subdue and/or deter tensions and episodes of confrontation usually arising between the MB and the state's security apparatus.⁶²² M.A.E. tells of the MB's determination in participating and excelling during the 2005 elections:

"The MB invested impressive energy and dedication during that time to win seats in Parliament. It was either do or die. The revolution has always been in the MB, it is never-ending. They stood against the idea of transferring authority by birth from father to son (from Hosni Mubarak to Gamal Mubarak) and they withstood military crackdowns, military trials and the aggressive force used to access MB homes and money."⁶²³

Ismail argues that in the context of this turbulent and violent relationship, the intervention of the Muslim Sisters to ease the tension demonstrates how womanhood "is constructed as an asset and a shield to be deployed in the face of abusive authorities [where] the men will not tolerate the abuse."⁶²⁴

The 2010 Elections - The 2010 elections were described by the media as one of the most flagrant shows of oppressive, undemocratic and fraudulent authoritarian rule during Mubarak's reign.⁶²⁵ In addition to the military's actions in rounding up MB candidates and supporters, many changes took place over the course of the five years leading up to the 2010 elections. Those changes included the constitutional amendment of law 88, which required judges to oversee the electoral process to ensure no violations were taking place.⁶²⁶ In

⁶²² Abdel-Fattah.

⁶²³ M.A.E. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, February 1, 2012.

⁶²⁴ Salwa Ismail, *Political Life in Cairo's New Quarters* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 135 in Blaydes and el-Tarouty, 379.

⁶²⁵ Ann M. Lesch, "Egypt's Spring: Causes of The Revolution," *Middle East Policy* 18, no. 3 (Fall 2011): 40-41.

⁶²⁶ "The Citizen's Guide to Ballot on Constitutional Amendments in March 26, 2007," on the official government website set up at the time, <http://constitution.sis.gov.eg/en/enconst1.htm> in "Elections in Egypt: State of Permanent Emergency Incompatible with Free and Fair Vote,"

2007, that role of the judges was changed to include overseeing voter participation, but they were stripped of their jurisdiction to take action against any violations they witnessed.⁶²⁷ Several local organizations⁶²⁸ such as the Center for Trade Union and Workers' Services had approached the regime in 2010 offering their services in monitoring the elections, but all were rejected, as the government insisted that it had the situation under control.⁶²⁹ Also, human rights groups and organizations were prevented from monitoring the *Shura* Council elections that took place in early 2010 when "judicial supervision has been replaced by a judicial commission which has refused to respect a previous court ruling allowing civil society groups to monitor elections."⁶³⁰ This signalled the continuation of the government with its long-standing tradition of voter bribery and vote rigging. It is for that reason that many will likely remember the 2010 elections as the worst alleged 'democratic' action ever to take place. Even in the face of requests put forth by the Obama administration to allow international monitors to ensure that legitimate elections take place, Mubarak's NDP refused on the grounds that an international presence would threaten the nation's

Human Rights Watch, November 23, 2010, accessed June 3, 2011, <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2010/11/23/elections-egypt>

⁶²⁷ Abigail Hauslohner. "Egypt's Elections and the Impersonation of Democracy," *Time.com*, November 27, 2010, accessed November 30, 2010, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2033050,00.html?xid=rss-fullworld-yahoo>

⁶²⁸ International organizations were barred by Egypt's government to act as observers in any electoral proceedings.

⁶²⁹ The candidates arrested constituted about one-fifth of the MB's cadres. Matt Bradley, "Egypt Rejects Civilian Observers over 'Security Fears'," *The National*, November 26, 2010, accessed November 26, 2010,

<http://www.thenational.ae/news/worldwide/middle-east/egypt-rejects-civilian-observers-over-security-fears?pageCount=0>

⁶³⁰ *Ibid.*

sovereignty and enable outsiders to interfere in Egypt's internal affairs.⁶³¹ It is worth noting here that, in this particular instance, the MB was welcoming - despite its strong anti-Western stance - of international monitors. The change in heart was spurred by the MB's realization that the 2010 elections were at stake due to the government's fraudulent interference. In effect, the MB openly called for the presence of international observers prior to election season.⁶³²

In the midst of the MB's preparations for the 2010 elections, they tried to approach other parties such as el-Tagammu, the Nasserist party and the Wafd party. However, all three decided not to ally with the MB as they differed on several issues, most notably the MB's viewpoint regarding women and Christians' rights to run for the presidency and other senior positions, as well as the MB's rigid Islamic frame of reference.⁶³³ The MB's Saad el-Katarni proclaimed that the members of the MB would not compromise their beliefs and principles in order to strike a deal with other parties.⁶³⁴ As for the Muslim Sisters, politically seasoned women like Dr. Manal Aboul-Hassan and Dr. Amal Abdel-Kareem were nominated to run.⁶³⁵ A professor of mass communication at Al-Azhar University, Aboul-Hassan competed for a seat in the presidential constituency during the 2010 elections.⁶³⁶ Concurrently, most of the campaign

⁶³¹ Amr Hamzawy and Michele Dunne, "Egyptian Opposition Wrestles over Participation in Elections," *The National*, October 21, 2010, accessed October 21, 2010, <http://www.thenational.ae/thenationalconversation/comment/egyptian-opposition-wrestles-over-participation-in-elections?pageCount=0>

⁶³² Ibid.

⁶³³ Ali, 93.

⁶³⁴ Ibid.

⁶³⁵ A.A.K., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 22, 2012 and M.A.H., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 15, 2012.

⁶³⁶ Aboul-Hassan was also al-Deiry's campaign manager in 2005.

activities set forth by the MB and the Muslim Sisters have been halted or sabotaged by security forces and regime crackdowns.

A New Era, a New Party - 2011/2012 Elections

With the commencement of election season in the summer of 2011, decrees were released by the temporary overseeing power - SCAF - that altered the Mubarak law's stipulation about the seats allocated for women. The amendment stated that for a party to be allowed to run, it has to include at least one female candidate in its party list, in order for the party to be allowed to run.⁶³⁷ Scholars look upon such practices in new or forming democracies favorably. Theoretically, descriptive representation is justifiable "via its contribution to democratic fairness, believing that electing members of historically disadvantaged subgroups deepens democratic legitimacy."⁶³⁸ However, such a stipulation did not guarantee a large percentage of women would win seats, whether in the People's Assembly (PA) or the *Shura* Council (SC). The FJP was founded on April 30 of 2011, and from that moment onwards, its members and its 'helicopter parent'⁶³⁹ - the MB's mammoth organization - have been working tirelessly to fully participate in elections as a legal party and movement since its

⁶³⁷ Sholkamy.

⁶³⁸ Piscopo, 451 and Jane Mansbridge, "Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent 'Yes' ," *Journal of Politics* 61 (1999): 628–57.

⁶³⁹ Nathan Brown described this relationship as the MB acting as the helicopter parent hovering closely over its infant, the FJP, protecting it and dictating its future direction. A telling act of such parental behaviour is the permanent reassignment of three members of the Supreme Old Guide - Muhammad Mursi, Saad al-Katatni, and Essam al-Eryan- to the FJP to run it. Refer to Nathan J. Brown, "The Muslim Brotherhood as Helicopter Parent," *Foreign Policy*, May 27, 2011, accessed June 3, 2011, http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/05/27/the_muslim_brotherhood_as_helicopter_parent

inception in 1928. Presently, the FJP offices are located throughout the country, as they were built on existing connections and relations that were established by the MB. At first, the MB intended to participate and not dominate the 2011 elections, however this stance soon changed as the MB's popularity grew rapidly in the absence of a stronghold regime. With their growing popularity, the MB's ambitions began to take root and increase. According to Brown, the MB realized their advantage for having attained mass support prior to the revolution. This support has been established as a "virtuous alternative to the corrupt system that governed Egyptians for so long and that allowed political, social and economic power to be deployed for private benefit."⁶⁴⁰ Brown explains that the MB's plan for a new constitution lacked a 'liberal,' 'leftist,' or 'progressive' characteristic, focusing more on delivering to the people a more democratic Egypt, that allows citizens to experience a separation of powers and the protection of one's political rights, with an always existing and contentious grey area in regards to human rights and women's rights.⁶⁴¹

Both the Muslim Sisters and the MB seemed dedicated to the realization of a descriptive representation of women in Parliament. That was the first step towards integrating a bigger standing of the female population in Parliament and it would also open avenues for women-related issues to reach center stage and command greater attention in law-making. The next step in the evolution of women in politics, in the midst of a new government and state, is to fight for gender equality. However, in the current political climate with its traditional

⁶⁴⁰ Nathan J. Brown, "When Victory Becomes An Option: Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood Confronts Success," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* (January 2012): 1.

⁶⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

outlook evident in all parties, including the FJP, such idea risks being perceived as radical and premature. Piscopo adds to this line by explaining that today's scholars are beginning to explore how political institutions and sociocultural norms change the level of women's descriptive representation, and whether female legislators substantively act for their ascriptive groups.⁶⁴² In addition to assessing whether the Muslim Sisters are empowered within the MB and FJP, the Sisters have the added burden of representing all women in Parliament – both in a descriptive and substantive manner. Nevertheless, the political parties accepted the SCAF's decision to implement a women's quota law, in an attempt to guarantee that every faction of society is represented in Parliament. Ideally, Piscopo supports the use of Quota laws, which would deepen the “substantive representation of women's group interests,” in addition to the expected descriptive representation of women as a group.⁶⁴³

The Freedom and Justice Party: An Introduction

The FJP's organizational structure somewhat mirrors the meticulous defragmentation of the MB's structure; a structure that intricately connects the MB's Supreme Guide to all levels, including the smallest unit known as the “family unit.”⁶⁴⁴ The FJP's structure operates as an extension to the MB General Guide and the Bureau; as evident in the ages of its senior executives which

⁶⁴² Piscopo, 448.

⁶⁴³ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁴ For more on the organizational structure of the Muslim Brothers, refer to Mitchell, 164-184 and refer to Appendix A.

exceed fifty-five. When the MB formed a party platform, it did not include anyone outside of its older generation bloc.⁶⁴⁵

Comparable to the MB's structure, the FJP is made up of many committees that cover a range of public concerns such as media, political awareness, membership, education, social work and local development.⁶⁴⁶ Each governorate in Egypt is further divided up in areas or sections, using a system that has been in use for years and is widely known by the public. The system identifies each district and its boundaries according to police stations' geographical estimates of each district.⁶⁴⁷ During election season, the FJP and the MB divided the largest city - Cairo - into four regions, in order to more efficiently divide the electoral responsibilities and the duties of their campaigning strategy, and to better represent the FJP, by making the party more accessible to the people.⁶⁴⁸ The MB financially supported the FJP from its inception and throughout election season, by setting up offices and funding media-related expenses and educational and training workshops in preparation for elections.⁶⁴⁹

The FJP's Mission Statement and Party Platform

The founding statement of the FJP affirmed the MB's and the party's dedication towards the full implementation of *sharia* as law and a way of life. The statement affirmed the FJP's

⁶⁴⁵ Amr el-Chobaky, "Makhater al-istiqtabb bayn tayarat al madaniya wa al-Islamiyya, hal yomken sina'at al tawafuq?" [The Dangers of Polarisation between the Islamic and Civil Currents – Is it Possible to Reach an Agreement?] *A.F.A. Alternate Papers* (2011): 8.

⁶⁴⁶ A.M.A., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 31, 2012. Also, refer to Appendix A.

⁶⁴⁷ A.A.K., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 22, 2012.

⁶⁴⁸ O.B., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 21, 2012.

⁶⁴⁹ A.A.K., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 22, 2012.

“deep belief in the need to state in the Constitution that Islam is the official religion of the state, Arabic is the official state language and that the principles of Islamic *sharia* are the main source of legislation, and thus, the application of *sharia* in all walks of life.”⁶⁵⁰

Such an affirmation of the importance of *sharia* is reflective of the organization’s and the party’s belief that *sharia* is the right tool to guarantee the advancement and progress of the Egyptian people. This corresponds to the Founding Statement of the FJP: Applying *sharia* is a

“response to the demands of the majority of the Egyptian people who believe that the Sharia is the best method to ensure the reformation of the conditions of our society that will lead it to happiness and progress, as well as guaranteeing the rights of our fellow Christians and their freedom of belief and worship according to their laws and rules.”⁶⁵¹

Furthermore, the FJP affirms in their statement that Egypt as a nation shares the same ideology as that of the FJP and MB – where they described Egypt as “a civil state with an Islamic reference.”⁶⁵² The mission statement continues to explain the FJP methodology as Islamic; yet affirms that alongside its list of principles that insists that *sharia* is the first and foremost principle; the FJP is to “recognize and emphasize the civility of the state, and thus, there would not be a military state or a religious state (a theocracy).”⁶⁵³ The fine lines that are drawn within the terms: civil state, Islamic reference, Islamic methodology and full implementation of *sharia* are problematic, as Egyptian masses are yet to fully grasp the differences and divergences of such terminologies and practices.

⁶⁵⁰ “The Founding Statement of the Freedom and Justice Party,” *The Freedom and Justice Party Official Website*, accessed October 20, 2012, <http://www.fjponline.com/view.php?pid=1>

⁶⁵¹ Ibid.

⁶⁵² Ibid.

⁶⁵³ Ibid.

Moreover, extremist entities such as the highly vocal Salafist parties and their social currents fail to comprehend the differences entailed in implementing *sharia* principles and transforming Egypt into a theocratic state. In effect, Salafis have time and again called for the implementation of the strictest interpretation of *sharia* in regards to issues that negatively affect women, such as reducing the age of marriage to eight years of age, and other issues pertaining to human development.⁶⁵⁴ Even though the Salafist current in Egypt was not very strong or obvious prior to the revolution, and even though the Salafis have never taken a political stance before, the MB was well aware of the Salafist influence and clout in Egyptian society. This was evident in how they carefully weighed the backlash they would receive from their Salafi brothers when they fielded female candidates. For example, during the 2000 elections, Abdel-Latif explained that the senior MB leadership was worried that “the Salafists, would try to discredit the Brotherhood in the eyes of the public by portraying them as less Islamic. They worried the decision might even antagonize their conservative followers as well as sympathizers within the Salafist circles.”⁶⁵⁵

Expectedly, the FJP - similarly to the MB - included the importance of the family unit in its methodology. The founding statement described the family as a

“smaller essential part of the community, which is a building block in the society and the greater national sphere where the methodology [would] formulate the foundations and principles upon which the sound family stands safe, while dividing the duties and responsibilities

⁶⁵⁴ Maggie Michael, “Egypt’s Brotherhood: Shariah Must be Charter Base,” *Associated Press*, October 31, 2012, accessed October 31, 2012, <http://news.yahoo.com/egypts-brotherhood-shariah-must-charter-172207574.html>

⁶⁵⁵ Abdel-Latif, “In the Shadow of the Brothers,” 16-17.

equitably among its members in a way that is based on the values of love, loyalty, fidelity and constructiveness.”⁶⁵⁶

The FJP published several of its programs for the 2011 party platform and that included the following: Tourism and Civil Aviation, Urban Development, Social Justice, Religious Leadership, Productivity Development, Political Leadership, Economic Development, Freedoms and Political Reform and Human Development.⁶⁵⁷

The Program on Freedoms and Political Reform establishes that all Egyptians are equal and have the right to the same freedoms and privileges, as the FJP affirms that it will “guarantee non-discrimination among citizens in rights and duties on the basis of religion, sex or colour.”⁶⁵⁸ However, the next line rationalizes that the FJP aims to “ensure women's access to all their rights, consistent with the values of Islamic law, maintaining the balance between their duties and rights.”⁶⁵⁹ The latter statement begs the question: whose values? And which principle and teaching of Islamic law will the FJP follow?⁶⁶⁰ Divergent solutions on the best course of action and ideology to follow in the implementation of *sharia* law, have caused some conflicts amongst the MB’s

⁶⁵⁶ “The Founding Statement of the Freedom and Justice Party.”

⁶⁵⁷ “Party Platform 2011,” *The Freedom and Justice Party Official Website*, accessed October 20, 2012, <http://www.fjponline.com/articles.php?pid=80>

⁶⁵⁸ “FJP 2011 Program on Freedoms and Political Reform,” *The Freedom and Justice Party Official Website*, accessed October 20, 2012, <http://www.fjponline.com/article.php?id=197>

⁶⁵⁹ “FJP 2011 Program on Freedoms and Political Reform.”

⁶⁶⁰ According to Ibrahim el-Houdaiby, political analyst and son of Ma’moun el-Hodaiby, there are four different schools of thought that coexisted within the Muslim Brotherhood: 1- al Banna’s school; a relatively modernist school of thought championed by Mohamed Abduh, 2- A traditionalist school, championed by Al-Azhar’s long history of scholarship, 3- Qutbism, and 4- A Salafi/Wahabi school. Ibrahim el-Houdaiby, “The Muslim Brotherhood's Trial of Pluralism,” *Midan Masr*, October 17, 2012, accessed October 17, 2012, <http://www.midanmasr.com/en/article.aspx?ArticleID=59>

different generational blocs, resulting in many of the MB's youth leaving the MB's fold and creating their own party.⁶⁶¹

Women-related issues were also recognized in the FJP's Program on Human Development that, yet again, point out the importance of ensuring that women are able to perform their roles and duties within society, alongside their "active participation in elections and membership of the elected legislative and local councils."⁶⁶² The human development program focuses more on the rights and roles of mothers and children, while clearly stating that a woman's concern is as equal as a man's. In effect, the FJP confirms its

"respect, appreciation and support for women's roles as wives, mothers and makers of men; and aims to better prepare them for this role. The party aims for society to benefit from women's capabilities and resources, and realises that their giving is more, not less, than men's giving."⁶⁶³

Moreover, the human development program focuses on the injustices and failures of the NCW and the CEDAW, for its inability to understand and better complement Egypt's traditions and cultures. The MB described the NCW as "a weapon of the former regime [utilized] to break up and destroy families" in an official statement found on the MB's website.⁶⁶⁴ The FJP blames the exposure of Egypt's systematic corruption affected by several parties, on the NCW and the National Council for Motherhood and Childhood which "receive[s] foreign funds

⁶⁶¹ Amira Howaidy, "Brotherhood, Divided by Five," *Al-Ahram Weekly*, no. 1054, June 30- July 6, 2011, accessed August 19, 2012, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2011/1054/eg5.htm>

⁶⁶² "FJP 2011 Program on Human Development," *The Freedom and Justice Party Official Website*, accessed October 20, 2012, <http://www.fjponline.com/article.php?id=195>

⁶⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁴ Shaimaa Fayed, "Egypt Female Rights Official Battles Islamists" *Reuters*, June 7, 2012, accessed June 13, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/06/07/us-egypt-women-idUSBRE85612X20120607>

from suspicious sources,”⁶⁶⁵ and should be abolished for its role as “the intelligence arm of the international players in Egypt,” and to be replaced by a national council for the family affairs and security.⁶⁶⁶ The FJP condemned Egypt’s decision to join the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which they state was a decision made without consulting the general public, especially that the convention allows it to meddle in private marital and family issues.⁶⁶⁷ This is seen as a departure from the earlier generation of leaders who would have halted any talk of rights within an Islamic reference according to Brown. The current leaders have no trouble overriding human rights for the implementation of *sharia*-based rights.⁶⁶⁸ In effect, the FJP declares it its right to insist on the “re-consideration of those agreements,” as they may not be complementary to Egypt’s religion; in this case: Islam and its traditions.⁶⁶⁹

The human development program reveals the FJP’s interest to integrate traditional family values in Egypt’s education curricula.⁶⁷⁰ The MB’s educational process is paramount to the complete integration of the individual and family into the fold of the MB movement. The MB’s educational project known as *tarbiyah* or training “represents the social activity tool of eradicating traditional society bonds. Educators of religious lessons - especially the Islamic history - are affected by religious ideological romantic impacts.”⁶⁷¹ It is unclear whether such an

⁶⁶⁵ “FJP 2011 Program on Human Development.”

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁸ Brown, “When Victory Becomes An Option,”14.

⁶⁶⁹ “FJP 2011 Program on Human Development.”

⁶⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁷¹ Muslim Brotherhood: Structure & Spread.”

educational tool could be practically applied to the current educational system, where more secular and less Islamic-oriented curriculum is used.⁶⁷² In regards to women's rights, the MB had long aired its rejection and disdain of Egypt's personal status laws, which stipulates a woman's right to divorce in accordance to *sharia*; an interpretation they have refused.⁶⁷³ As a result, the FJP's program highlights its objective to "make personal status laws comply with Islamic law, while reserving the right of Copts to their own personal status laws."⁶⁷⁴ The program concludes with the party's long-term vision, which includes:

"developing a road map to achieve complete independence for the Egyptian state, in all matters pertaining to family, women and children, beginning with a review of the CEDAW and CRC (Committee on the Rights of the Child) international conventions, and ending with a popular decision on those, so that Egyptian policy, in this regard, stems from the inherent pure values of the Egyptian people, not from some international agenda."⁶⁷⁵

With the dissolution of the Mubarak regime, the FJP and its 'helicopter parent' intend to eradicate any remnants of the old regime, including its ties to secular NGOs and international conventions and agreements. Before the revolution, the MB had always used an ambiguous tone in regards to international human rights instruments, but it was clear in the fight for human rights, as it focused on political rights; due to their impressive show of strength in

⁶⁷² There are two types of education provided in public and private schools in Egypt: General education and a religious education provided by al-Azhar. For more information, refer to "Education Development: National Report of Arab Republic of Egypt from 1990 to 2000," *National Center for Educational Research and Development* (NCERD)(2001): 22-23, accessed August 23, 2012, <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/international/ice/natrap/Egypt.pdf>

⁶⁷³ Abdel-Raheem Ali argues that their version of *fiqh* is dated and different from what is applied in modern day Egypt, as it originates from morals, traditions and social norms previously found in the Arabian peninsulas. A.R.A., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 30, 2012.

⁶⁷⁴ "FJP 2011 Program on Human Development."

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid.

Egypt's elections during the Mubarak era. For example, the MB did not always reject all Western human rights organizations. During the Mubarak era, the MB was continually cooperating with organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch to document the injustices and cruel treatment of MB members by Mubarak's security apparatuses.⁶⁷⁶ For all intents and purposes, the CEDAW and NCW may be viewed, by secular-minded women and Copts, as insurance tactics to prevent the complete Islamization of Egyptian society and government. Lastly, the FJP echoed the MB's previous role in providing social services where the government has failed to do so - under Mubarak's regime - by identifying the practice of political pluralism in their program on Freedoms and Political Reform. The FJP recognized the existence of political pluralism as "one of the assets of the political process," and their intention to "establish the rules of partnership between the state and civil society organizations to carry burdens of rejuvenation and development of the homeland."⁶⁷⁷ In effect, if such a program were to be executed, the MB and FJP's presence will be seen and felt in both Egypt's civil society and government, thereby creating an all-encompassing and all-powerful entity much like the old regime.

The FJP has tried marketing itself as a party for all people, yet there is still doubt as to whether non-MB members can join the FJP, with the exception being the 'token' Coptic Christian member Rafik Habib - as its third in command.⁶⁷⁸

⁶⁷⁶ H.M., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 30, 2012.

⁶⁷⁷ "FJP 2011 Program on Freedoms and Political Reform."

⁶⁷⁸ Bradley Hope, "A Coptic Christian's Reasons for Backing the Muslim Brotherhood," *The National*, June 22, 2011, accessed June 22, 2011, <http://www.thenational.ae/news/worldwide/middle-east/a-coptic-christians-reasons-for-backing-the-muslim-brotherhood?pageCount=0>

According to Abdel-Raheem Ali, Habib's situation is quite a unique one. For example, the Coptic member does not believe in the concept of party pluralism, where his academic research work focuses on how the notion of party pluralism does not complement the political climate of the Arabian peninsula and the 'Arab bloc'.⁶⁷⁹ Furthermore, Ali claims that Habib joined the ranks of the FJP because it was a representative of the MB, and not that it was an autonomous political party engaging in the current democratic process.⁶⁸⁰ An interview was conducted with a young male graduate, who joined the FJP without being a member of the MB, due to his conviction in the FJP's party platform.⁶⁸¹ He joined a month before the start of parliamentary elections due to his admiration for the FJP party platform and the MB's community-based movement, where the daily micro-development of their people, positively contributed to the society. Furthermore, he was surprised to find that a majority of people that he knew (friends and family) were MB members. However, he chose not to become a MB member due to the deep commitment that is required of its members and the difference of ideologies.⁶⁸² He believes that when more liberal people (such as himself) infiltrate the party, they will eventually influence and change the idea within the FJP, and eventually, the MB. However, his case is not necessarily a demonstration of the FJP's willingness to accept non-MB members, as the interviewees' extended family includes several senior MB members.

⁶⁷⁹ A.R.A., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 31, 2012.

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁸¹ A.S., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 24, 2012.

⁶⁸² The interviewee described himself as a liberal whose life choices and non-political affiliations would never be accepted by the MB.

The FJP and the Muslim Sisters

The Muslim Sisters are active members of the party and have already established a system of communication with every female party member within Egypt. According to Abdel Moaty Zaki, a prominent MB member, the FJP membership amounts to about 10,000, with ten percent of that total number being women.⁶⁸³ Recently, the MB released a statement affirming that it is working on “increasing the women’s involvement on all levels to play a role in shaping Egypt's future.”⁶⁸⁴ The female party members with senior roles meet weekly and monthly, to discuss present complications and future solutions.⁶⁸⁵ As mentioned before, the city of Cairo is divided into four districts: Central, North, East and West. Each region is headed by a female secretary, who is also the head of the women’s committee of her assigned region. Similarly, the FJP’s women committees have assigned its assistant secretaries in accordance with those pre-existing areas. In addition, there is a female secretary position that is responsible for overseeing all the women committees in Cairo. Dr. Manal Aboul-Hassan currently occupies this position. The four regional secretaries meet with the head of Cairo’s women committees on a monthly basis. For example, Hoda Abdel-Moneim heads the region of East Cairo, where her assistant secretaries are assigned to seventeen sections/areas. Each section has one to four women aiding the assistant secretaries and secretaries.⁶⁸⁶ Such division of labour is

⁶⁸³ There is no exact data on the number female members in the MB and FJP by non-MB sources. Rachel Shsbi, “Sisters of the Revolution,” *The Sunday Times - Culture International* (September 25, 2011), 6.

⁶⁸⁴ “Women in the Muslim Brotherhood,” *IkhwanWeb*, September 11, 2011, accessed May 22, 2012, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=29390>

⁶⁸⁵ M.A.H., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 15, 2012.

⁶⁸⁶ A.A.K., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 22, 2012.

necessary to ensure that the FJP covers each region's needs and at the same time, covers the party's needs in providing 'welcome seminars' for new members, and to plan and organize educational workshops and training sessions.⁶⁸⁷ According to one FJP member's experience, it seemed that the women have the freedom to move across the FJP structure and change their roles. For example, while she was preliminarily given the role of the secretary of the women's committee in the 6th of October region, she opted to assume the position of secretary of media relations for that same region due to her broad media relations background.⁶⁸⁸ The political awareness committee has been a very active entity within the FJP and amongst its female members. This was essential because the majority of the Muslim Sisters, who have become FJP members, lacked real experience and exposure to extensive political educational tools in respect to understanding Egypt's political history, as well as the current structure and function of governmental entities.⁶⁸⁹

The female members of the FJP are educated, well organized and unwavering in their involvement with Egyptian society through political and social means.⁶⁹⁰ However, not all FJP and MB members are comfortable seeing women occupy political positions. For instance, the head of the Muslim Sisters Division in East Cairo - a male MB member - does not find it socially acceptable or fitting for a woman to be outside of her home at late hours of the night,

⁶⁸⁷ M.A.H., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 15, 2012.

⁶⁸⁸ H.Z., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, February 7, 2012. H.A.M., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 24, 2012.

⁶⁸⁹ G.R., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 17, 2012.

⁶⁹⁰ Roula Khalaf, "The Muslim Sisterhood," *FT Magazine*, November 2, 2012, accessed March 24, 2013, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/167164a6-1e34-11e2-8e1d-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2OjQtTTpN>

something that is typically required of Members of Parliament.⁶⁹¹ The same argument applies if the MB were to integrate the Muslim Sisters and allow them to run in internal elections for a position in the MB's Guidance Bureau Office, where the late hours do not comply with social norms and *sharia* principles.⁶⁹² After the revolution, the Muslim Sisters Division of the MB organization still remains a separate entity and does not fall under the organization's hierarchical structure.⁶⁹³

As aforementioned, the exclusion of the Muslim Sisters Division from the MB's organizational structure was attributed to the MB's concern for the women's safety in regards to the constant political crackdowns that were targeting all MB-related activities and members. This is not the case anymore as all members of both the organization and the party proudly identify their association and political standing.⁶⁹⁴ Currently, the MB organization is looking to revitalise its out-dated structure and intend to integrate the Sisters within the new and democratically-charged organizational hierarchy.⁶⁹⁵ Nevertheless, Essam el-Erian, the FJP's vice president, vowed that the party intends to employ its female cadres in all

⁶⁹¹ A.M.A., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 31, 2012.

⁶⁹² Ibid.

⁶⁹³ Abdel-Latif, "Women In Politics: Sisters in the Muslim Brotherhood." Also, refer to Appendix A.

⁶⁹⁴ During many interviews conducted with both male and female members of the MB, it was plainly stated by each the nature of their work in the FJP and how long they have been active members of the MB. That was not the case before the revolution, especially in regards to the Muslim Sisters.

⁶⁹⁵ It has been hinted at, but not officially stated - that the MB is currently working on restructuring their organizational pyramid, with an intention to finally integrate the Muslim Sisters Division.

fields and disciplines; women are currently present in the FJP's various secretariats, as well as provincial and party unit secretariats.⁶⁹⁶

The FJP's Pre-election Activities

According to a MB member, the MB's internal nomination system has been operating for almost 22 years. The FJP adopted the same practice when choosing its candidates for the 2011/2012 elections. Each *shu'ba* would choose two individuals (after consulting the group on those wishing to run), and then they would run for the internal elections of their area/section.⁶⁹⁷ This process continues for each area, district, and governorate until the final list is presented to the Guidance Bureau. This process may resume for a month.⁶⁹⁸ After the final list of FJP candidates is confirmed, the order, with which MB candidates are placed on the party's list for each district and area, depends on their popularity within that area.⁶⁹⁹

Amr Zaky - a MB member and a Member of Parliament - has stated that there are three eligibility requirements to represent the MB in elections:

"The MB candidate had to be 1- well known in their district; 2- competent and has the right set of skills to participate in the FJP's project of regenerating the Egyptian society; and 3- have a spotless reputation, and no 'image-tarnishing' past."⁷⁰⁰

⁶⁹⁶ "Freedom and Justice Party Launches Women's Cadres Project," *The Freedom and Justice Party Official Website*, October 1, 2012, accessed October 1, 2012, <http://www.fjponline.com/article.php?id=1019>

⁶⁹⁷ It is still to be confirmed whether the two individuals are nominated by the head of the *shu'ba* first, or the interested individuals are allowed to approach the head and nominate themselves. Interviews with MB members have revealed that both practices are being used.

⁶⁹⁸ O.B., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 21, 2012.

⁶⁹⁹ A.M.A Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 31, 2012.

⁷⁰⁰ A.Z., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, February 5, 2012.

Zaky further explained that the right candidate could be experienced in the fields of commerce, economic-related issues, industry or even sports in his opinion.⁷⁰¹ In regards to FJP female candidates, very few women possessed all three requirements due to the MB's long history with security fears and concerns during the Mubarak era. Hence, the female candidates were placed lower on the FJP's electoral lists.⁷⁰² Nevertheless, a prominent Muslim Sister, Hoda Abdel Moniem, the secretary of the FJP's women's committee in East Cairo was approached to run in the district of East Cairo (different from her place of residence), as number three on the FJP list, but she declined due to the fact that she lacked street presence in that district and she only knew a limited number of the district's residents.⁷⁰³ It was common for people to run in other districts where they did not reside, such as Dr. Amr Hamzawy who resided in the Mohandessein area, but chose to run in the Masr el-Jadida district during the People's Assembly elections of 2011.

FJP Workshops and Training Sessions

Prior to election day, the FJP sent its electoral cadres to training workshops and seminars to get them familiarized with campaigning activities and responsibilities. A MB supporter who headed the Cultural Programs Office at the MADA foundation, which was responsible for conducting such training sessions, explained that the duration of the workshops extends to six months divided into four to six training sessions. The supporter, a PhD candidate researching the rise

⁷⁰¹ A.Z., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, February 5, 2012.

⁷⁰² Ibid.

⁷⁰³ H.A.M., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 24, 2012.

of Salafist parties, described her respect and admiration for the MB. However, she explained that she did not join in order to retain her autonomy and objectivity, especially in regards to her academic studies. She trained several political parties prior to the elections including: el-Nour Party (Salafist), the FJP Party (MB), el-Karama Party (left-wing Nasserist), el-Adl (Liberal, Centrist, Secular) and el-Wasat Party (moderate, centrist, Islamic-oriented).⁷⁰⁴ N.A. explained that the training courses contained three learning objectives and themes:

“1- How to present to the public general political awareness, 2- How to manage the electoral campaigns, including presidential campaign management skills, if required, 3- Raise awareness of the meaning, roles and responsibilities of a party member.”⁷⁰⁵

The course also dealt with techniques in responding to opposing views, and in differentiating between political activities and the management of such activities.

When N.A. announced training dates, each party nominated three members to attend the courses. However, the number of women who were sent to attend was disappointing. Either only one woman or none at all were sent from each party at every round of training sessions.⁷⁰⁶ The Salafist party sent a fully veiled woman and el-Wasat party sent a total of two women. She explained that female participation in Egypt:

“does not depend on whether the ideology that is adhered to is Liberal or Islamist. In fact, female participation is more of a cultural issue, one that might also have to do with education. Having women as a front is still not a favorable option for any party. This, naturally, led to women being placed at the bottom of their parties’ lists.”⁷⁰⁷

⁷⁰⁴ N.A. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 30, 2012.

⁷⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁶ This example is only a sample that could be seen as indicative of more general female participation in other training centers.

⁷⁰⁷ Ibid.

In addition to signing up their candidates for training workshops, the FJP provided and distributed pamphlets with the aim of calming the country's fears of an Islamist takeover by providing extensive answers to questions concerning women's rights, the veiling of the female population and restrictions on tourism.⁷⁰⁸

Despite the lack of importance given to the *Shura Council* (SC) elections, the FJP trained its candidates for the SC campaigning activities. Ms. Sabah el-Saqqari - who won a seat in the SC in 2012 - secured her place in the SC as a MB representative. El-Saqqari explained that her training course was stretched over a three-month period. All candidates had to attend to regain general and specific knowledge of electoral districts as well as develop their interpersonal and communication skills. During her campaign, el-Saqqari asserted that female and male candidates were treated equally within the FJP and were respected by their voters on the street irrespective of gender. El-Saqqari, who had previous electoral experience when she joined campaign efforts of MB candidate Adel Hamed in 2005,⁷⁰⁹ explains that her 2011/2012 campaign trail included walking in her district's streets and shops in order to engage the public and introduce herself, and listening to the residents' social grievances and concerns. She explained her view of women in politics:

"I believe in women occupying political positions where they would have executive roles, as women in developing countries are more aware of the economic and social needs of family units, and therefore more competent in certain fields than men. A woman is aware of financial difficulties that face both men and women, even

⁷⁰⁸ A.S., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 24, 2012.

⁷⁰⁹ S.S., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, February 1, 2012.

if it meant dealing with her husband's unemployment state, and the restrictions and drawbacks such an event has on household finances."⁷¹⁰

Due to her belief that a society's development is measured by the development of its female population, she asserts the importance of government entities including and employing women, who represent half of the nation's population.

Regime's Actions of Deterrence

Experiencing aggressive reaction from security forces was not new to the MB. From Nasser's rule up to the 2011 revolution, the MB has been targeted especially when it was politically active on the streets. The 2000 parliamentary elections witnessed more of the MB, as Islamist MPs fielded nineteen seats, with seventeen of them allocated to the MB.⁷¹¹ Even though the Mubarak regime won an overwhelming majority, the second largest number of votes still belonged to a banned organization, which was continuing to threaten the stability of Mubarak's authoritarian hold.⁷¹² Despite the reality that the MB only managed to secure seventeen seats, it came as a shock in light of the major security clampdown the government enforced before and during voting procedures.⁷¹³ One telling incident occurred when a NDP member competed against Mamoun el-Hudaybi, a senior MB member and its official spokesman, in the same district. Voters were

⁷¹⁰ S.S., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, February 1, 2012.

⁷¹¹ Mona Makram-Ebeid. "Elections in Egypt: Rumbings for Change," in "Elections in the Middle East: What do they Mean?" ed. Iman Hamdy, *Cairo Papers in Social Science* 25, no. ½ (Spring/Summer 2002.), 28.

⁷¹² Michele Dunne and Amr Hamzawy, "The Ups and Downs of Political Reform in Egypt," in *Beyond the Façade: Political Reform in the Arab World*, eds. Marina Ottaway and Julia Choucair-Vizoso (Washington D.C.: Oakland Street Publishing, 2008), 20.

⁷¹³ El-Ghobashy, "The Metamorphosis Of The Egyptian Muslim Brothers," 387.

“surrounded by policemen armed with rifles and tear gas canisters who icily refused to let people into the polling station.”⁷¹⁴ As the judge who was assigned to monitor the station tried to intervene on behalf of the abused voters, the officer in charge told him that “judges were only responsible for the ballot box inside and had no authority outside the polling station.”⁷¹⁵

The 2000 elections in el-Raml district was an unforgettable show of the government’s determination to prevent any MB candidate, especially a woman, from winning. According to el-Halafawy, the idea of an Islamist woman competing with a secular force was catastrophic; the ramifications were great in terms of the damage done to the image of the Mubarak regime.⁷¹⁶ Presenting an Islamist woman in such a positive light, competing against men for a politically visible position in Parliament would weaken the government’s ability to counter the popularity of the MB.⁷¹⁷ It came as no surprise then that el-Halafawy’s husband and campaign manager was arrested during the early days of the campaign. El-Zaafarani was accused of instigating violence and rioting, and he was jailed for 45 days; then sent to prison for four months to await his trial.⁷¹⁸ El-Zaafarani was labeled by national newspapers as the “hostage held by the government over a woman.”⁷¹⁹ Soon afterwards, security officials approached el-Halafawy and

⁷¹⁴ Maye Kassem. “ The 2000 Election: New rules, New Tactics,” in “Elections in the Middle East: What do they Mean?” ed. Iman Hamdy, *Cairo Papers in Social Science* 25 no. ½ (Spring/Summer 2002.): 42.

⁷¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁷¹⁶ J.H. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, February 6, 2012.

⁷¹⁷ Blaydes and el-Tarouty, 365 and A.R.A. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 30, 2012.

⁷¹⁸ Al Bora’ei, 77.

⁷¹⁹ J.H. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, February 6, 2012.

offered to free her husband if she withdraws from the elections.⁷²⁰ Fearing for her husband's life, she contemplated her withdrawal, but soon discarded the notion when she received a message from him through his lawyer urging her to continue with her campaign efforts.⁷²¹ When government officials witnessed the masses of people marching and supporting her candidacy, they outlawed large gatherings with the help of a law released from the Ministry of Justice that limited rallies to ten people.⁷²² Due to time constraints and the small window of opportunity for voting activities, the MB failed to respond effectively to these measures. Moreover, many MB members and supporters were arrested during her campaign activities. Police and security officials arrested her delegates and campaigners, including her son, who was held for two days. In the midst of the mass arrests, el-Halafawy was struck in the head by the bottom end of a shotgun.⁷²³ The arrest of her fifty delegates, 48 hours before election day, was problematic; as they were responsible for overseeing the voting process to ensure that no fraud would take place in the polling stations during the voting process.⁷²⁴ The remainder of her constituency organized marches and demonstrations to help her mobilize voters to take part in the electoral process.⁷²⁵

In 2005, however, the MB won twenty percent of the 444 seats, thereby creating a real threat to the NDP's political weight and popularity. As a result, the

⁷²⁰ Abdel-Latif, 17.

⁷²¹ J.H. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, February 6, 2012.

⁷²² Ibid.

⁷²³ J.H. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, February 6, 2012 and Abdel-Latif, 17.

⁷²⁴ Ibid.

⁷²⁵ Ibid.

years from 2005 to 2010 were some of the worst that the MB had to endure in terms of political oppression; the regime systematically closed down MB's businesses, revoked MB's licences and, continuously and freely, arrested many members via the Emergency Law, which allowed such actions without probable cause.⁷²⁶ It was the worst military crackdown on the MB since the first days of Mubarak's reign.⁷²⁷ In May 2007, the use of Islam in political slogans and campaigns, such as the Brotherhood's "Islam is the Solution", was banned.⁷²⁸ Furthermore, the People's Assembly approved of excluding independent candidates from running in elections.⁷²⁹ As a result, the MB was unable to take part in the Upper House of Parliament, the *Shura* Council election in June 2007 and the local elections of April 2008.⁷³⁰ In April 2008, a military tribunal condemned twenty-five members of the MB to between three and ten years in prison.⁷³¹ Muhammad Ali Bashar and Khairat al-Shater, both members of the MB's ruling body, were sentenced to seven years for the financing of an 'illegal organization.'⁷³²

The MB reacted to the political and judicial campaign against them by drafting a political program of their own, to calm the fears of the Coptic society

⁷²⁶ Dunne and Hamzawy, 34-35.

⁷²⁷ During the interview process with two female MB members, they recounted how difficult it was when many male MB members – mostly family members - were arrested and/or interrogated. H.A.M. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 24, 2012, and M.A.E. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, February 1, 2012.

⁷²⁸ Dunne and Hamzawy, 28.

⁷²⁹ Ibid., 26-27.

⁷³⁰ Soage and Franganillo, 52.

⁷³¹ Ibid.

⁷³² Sebnem Gumuscu, "Class, Status, and Party: The Changing Face of Political Islam in Turkey and Egypt," *Comparative Political Studies* 43, no. 7 (February 26, 2010): 838, accessed April 15, 2012, DOI: 10.1177/0010414010361341

and the concerns of the secular intellectuals.⁷³³ The desired effect was far from achieved. As the draft was circulated and studied by numerous intellectuals, politicians and *ulama'*, the reaction that the MB received was anything but positive.⁷³⁴ The 128-page document affirmed the MB's commitment to a parliamentary democracy and was comprised of a general description of what the party would look like through the application of the MB's social vision.⁷³⁵ However, it contained several amendments that were far from democratic in regards to women and the Coptic minority, as well as the affirmation and inclusion of the laws of *sharia* in defining every policy.⁷³⁶ The democratic program included "the banning of women and Copts from becoming head of state...and the creation of a body of *ulama'* to advise Parliament on the Islamic validity of its legislation"⁷³⁷. This resulted from the conviction that only Muslims are eligible for the presidency; it is the president has the power to oversee and act on Islamic issues, such as the implementation of *sharia*, and that it would therefore be 'unjust' for a non-Muslim to become Egypt's president.⁷³⁸ Inevitably, the publishing of the MB's program was postponed indefinitely due to its negative reception.⁷³⁹

Prior to the formation of the April 6th movement in 2008, the MB was the only entity to represent an opposition and a real threat to the state, which resulted in the continuous harassment of its members through arrests, financial

⁷³³ Rashwan, 7.

⁷³⁴ Soage and Franganillo, 52.

⁷³⁵ "Egypt's Muslim Brothers: Confrontation or Integration?" 16.

⁷³⁶ Bradley, 65 and Soage and Franganillo, 52.

⁷³⁷ Ibid.

⁷³⁸ "Egypt's Muslim Brothers: Confrontation or Integration," 16.

⁷³⁹ Soage and Franganillo, 52.

confiscation and home searches.⁷⁴⁰ In addition to the military's actions of rounding up MB candidates and supporters, changes such as the constitutional amendment of law 88 took place, which required judges to oversee the electoral process to ensure that no violations take place.⁷⁴¹ It was the overwhelming lack of transparency and continuous bullying that ensured the failure of the MB and any other party. Such a strike was expected, argued Amr Hamzawy.⁷⁴² He stated that statements made by several NDP leaders pointed towards "the ruling establishment's intent to minimize the Brotherhood's presence in the new assembly."⁷⁴³ Most opposition parties called for a boycott of the 2010 elections - with the MB unsure of its stance - after the elections for the *Shura* Council proved to be unfair and rigged.⁷⁴⁴

In the months leading up to the 2010 elections, over 1,000 MB members – candidates included – were arrested,⁷⁴⁵ to improve the chances for the NDP to gain the majority vote and to ensure the failure of other political parties, in addition to the MB.⁷⁴⁶ Moreover, it was a tactical attempt to halt the MB

⁷⁴⁰ H.A.M. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 24, 2012.

⁷⁴¹ "The Citizen's Guide to Ballot on Constitutional Amendments in March 26, 2007," on the official government website set up at the time, <http://constitution.sis.gov.eg/en/enconst1.htm> in "Elections in Egypt: State of Permanent Emergency Incompatible with Free and Fair Vote," *Human Rights Watch*, November 23, 2010, accessed June 3, 2011, <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2010/11/23/elections-egypt>

⁷⁴² Amr Hamzawy was a research director of Carnegie Middle East Centre and an expert on Islamist politics. Hamzawy ran as a candidate for the Egyptian bloc during the People's Assembly elections in 2011.

⁷⁴³ Amr Hamzawy and Michele Dunne, "Brotherhood Enters Elections in a Weakened State," *Carnegie Commentary*, November 15, 2010, accessed November 25, 2010, <http://carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=41934>

⁷⁴⁴ Mahmoud Gaweesh, Adel el-Daraghi and Ebtessam Talab, "Opposition Parties Label Shura Council Elections 'Terrorism'," *Egypt Independent*, June 4, 2010, accessed March 20, 2012, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/opposition-parties-label-shura-council-elections-terrorism>

⁷⁴⁵ Matt Bradley, "Ruling Party Risks Egypt Slipping through Tight Grip," *The National*, November 28, 2010, accessed November 29, 2010, <http://www.thenational.ae/unassigned-content/polls/ruling-party-risks-egypt-slipping-through-tight-grip?pageCount=0>

⁷⁴⁶ Hauslohner, "Egypt's Elections and the Impersonation of Democracy."

organization's many activities and preparations that had been set in place.⁷⁴⁷ Other tactics were used to curb the pro-MB voters from casting their vote. Many voting stations were closed down at the last minute – most of these stations were located in areas known for their MB affiliations – and the presence of the military was evident at every station.⁷⁴⁸

El-Deiry's legal consultant also served as Aboul-Hassan's legal consultant for the 2010 elections, where she was running against the NDP's Sameh Fahmy - the Minister of Petroleum at the time.⁷⁴⁹ The women of the MB were harassed and physically assaulted on the streets during one of the peaceful processions they normally conducted as part of their campaign strategy. Moreover, what started as a march of twenty-five people, dwindled to a group of five people, as the security forces declared that such large gatherings posed a security threat. Furthermore, ever since the MB stated that it would contest one-third of the parliamentary seats, almost 400 MB members were arrested, and security forces attacked their privately owned MB businesses.⁷⁵⁰ It was reported by a Muslim Sister that, during one of the marches, a group of thugs attacked them while the police watched and did nothing.⁷⁵¹ In fact, the government was known to hire female thugs to physically attack and verbally assault the MB women during their marches.⁷⁵² The schemes of vote rigging and voter fraud were extreme to the

⁷⁴⁷ H.A.M. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 24, 2012.

⁷⁴⁸ "Brotherhood Win No Seats in First Round of Egypt Vote," *The National*, November 30, 2010, accessed December 30, 2010, <http://www.thenational.ae/news/worldwide/middle-east/brotherhood-win-no-seats-in-first-round-of-egypt-vote>

⁷⁴⁹ H.A.M. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 24, 2012.

⁷⁵⁰ "Egypt: More than 100 Women to Contest Parliamentary Polls," *IkhwanWeb*, November 9, 2010, accessed November 20, 2012, <http://ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=27089>

⁷⁵¹ Ibid.

⁷⁵² R.H. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, February 9, 2012.

point that one Muslim Sister found the name of her deceased son on a voters' list.⁷⁵³ Another Sister ran in that election as part of the quota system knowing fully well the elections were going to be rigged.⁷⁵⁴ A.A.K. recalled:

“I was harassed and interrogated by security officials and sent to court, I could not officially reveal my political affiliations in writing, despite the fact that they were well aware of my allegiances; but there lacked any documentation to prove my association to a banned entity.”⁷⁵⁵

In addition, campaigning as an illegal organization, in an inequitable election, doubled the challenges facing the MB and the Muslim Sisters. One Sister argued that banning their slogan because it had a religious connotation was unacceptable as *sharia* was stated as the source of legislation in Egypt's Constitution.⁷⁵⁶ Such a statement was indicative of two possibilities: either the MB as an organization did not acknowledge Mubarak's amendment of that particular article, or that the internal knowledge base and political awareness of the MB and its Muslim Sisters Division was not as extensive as it should have been. When Azza el-Garf tried to submit her nomination to the electoral office, after she won the MB's internal election to represent the MB in the 6th of October region, they refused her nomination documents; claiming that there were several required documents missing. El-Garf described her experience:

“The electoral office made it increasingly difficult for me to run in the elections that I eventually had to drop out of the race. My husband was arrested as an additional plan to intimidate and discourage me from running, as I was a well-known figure in my constituency. I held many seminars, where I engaged the public - both men and women - in my district to prove my dedication,

⁷⁵³ H.A.M. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 24, 2012.

⁷⁵⁴ A.A.K. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 22, 2012.

⁷⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁶ Ibid.

competence and ability to deliver public services and effectively present the residents' grievances in the Assembly."⁷⁵⁷

The harassment was so alarming that the Freedoms Committee at the Journalists Syndicate organized a protest on behalf of the writer and journalist, Badr Mohamed Badr (el-Garf's husband), following the security forces' raid of his house; where they confiscated his money and personal documents.⁷⁵⁸

M.A.E. affirmed the strong-arming of the government as she explained:

"The MB has always been in a state of revolution against the regime. The MB's revolution started when it decided to stand against authority in election. Contesting in the political field is via elections. But with the unlawful practices of the regime, our efforts never had a chance to bear fruit. No law allows such practices where an entity engages in elections while forces try to stop it, and where this entity wins seats and has overwhelming support via votes. This was exactly how the regime behaved. A state's laws and constitution should not be undermined in such a way that it eradicates the Egyptian people's rights and freedoms. You should not be allowed to convene a false Parliament and elect a fabricated representation of the people's will."⁷⁵⁹

During another significant incident, when a Sister decided to run in the Moqattam district in Cairo, her husband was arrested less than a day after her name appeared in newspapers.⁷⁶⁰ This resulted in her withdrawal from the elections; and her husband was released from jail shortly before the revolution. She explained that a security official, in a phone conversation, told her to make a choice between a seat in the PA or her husband's freedom.⁷⁶¹ However, the national security forces continued to harass and monitor her family even after the

⁷⁵⁷ A.A.K, Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 22, 2012.

⁷⁵⁸ "Freedoms Committee Calls for Demonstration against the Arrest of Badr Mohamed Badr," *IkhwanWeb*, December 15, 2010, accessed January 10, 2012, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=27538&ref=search.php>

⁷⁵⁹ M.A.E Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, February 1, 2012.

⁷⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁶¹ Ibid.

elections, and until the days leading up to the revolution, bringing the total of visits to her home to eight during that time frame.⁷⁶² Hoda Ghaniya represented the MB in a small town in Nile River Delta where her husband Hesham Khafagy was arrested following her nomination. In other regions and districts, the Sisters had an easier time campaigning for Seham el-Gamal as the MB candidate in city of Daheqleya.⁷⁶³ Susan Saad Zaghloul was to represent the MB in the female quota seats.⁷⁶⁴

The publication of the MB's 1994 document and the participation of the Muslim Sisters in the 2000-2010 elections as candidates, voters, recruiters and campaigners; have given rise to the realization of the MB's position of women within Egypt's society. The MB insists that it has always been in favor of women's rights maintaining that "limiting the Muslim woman's right to participate in elections weakens the winning chances of Islamist candidates."⁷⁶⁵ However, such a statement may only reflect the MB's determination in succeeding in elections, through the participation of the Muslim Sisters and the resources they possess in campaigning and voter participation. Blaydes points out that the MB's electoral participation was constant due to the organization's belief that the

⁷⁶² M.A.E Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, February 1, 2012.

⁷⁶³ Prior to running, el-Gamal attended an intensive course to become familiar with the MB's agenda and electoral program, and regularly took part in the MB's Political Committee sessions in Mansoura in 2010. "FJP Female MP Says Will Represent Entire Community, Not Just Women," *FJPonline*, January 9, 2012, accessed March 29, 2012, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=29528&ref=search.php>

⁷⁶⁴ "Susan Saad Zaghloul, the Only Woman Winner of Individual Seats in Egyptian Elections," *IkhwanWeb*, February 25, 2012, accessed September 21, 2012, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=29716&ref=search.php> and Aryn Baker, Abigail Hauslohner and Kafr Shubin, "What's So Scary about Egypt's Islamists?" *Time.com*, November 29, 2010, accessed December 3, 2010, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2032260-3,00.html>

⁷⁶⁵ Tawfiq Yusuf, *Al-Wa'ī, al-Fikr al-siyasi al-mu'asir 'ī nda al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*, [The Muslim Brothers' Contemporary Political Thought] (Kuwait: Maktabat al-Manar al-Islamiyya, 2001), 253.

corrupt regime would cease to function eventually, and the MB will become “well-positioned to move from opposition in Parliament to a more active leadership role.”⁷⁶⁶

The 2011/2012 elections was remembered as the first time Egypt’s political realm experienced the first taste of democracy, as parties were free to assemble, congregate and campaign without any restrictions. It was a liberating experience for the MB; especially as they gathered their wealth of human cadres to campaign and collect votes without fear of arrests or harassment from security forces and/or military. Whether the MB is truly dedicated to placing women in general, and the Muslim Sisters in particular, in more public and more senior positions within Egypt’s government and Parliament is yet to be seen. History shows that the majority of the female candidates, who contested parliamentary seats on behalf of the MB, were mostly wives of prominent MB members. Hosam Tammam, an expert on the MB, argued that placing MB female candidates in elections was done only to enhance the group’s image; the MB maintained that it’s in its interest to “challenge stereotypes about its animosity to women. Yet, it was a paradoxical move because that same female candidate that they fielded did not have the right to run or vote for [the MB’s] internal offices.”⁷⁶⁷ The idea that a woman is first and foremost a mother and a wife, is still a concept that is prevalent in Islamic feminist rhetoric and in the MB; pushing many to accuse the MB of using women as means to justify its end of presenting a more democratic

⁷⁶⁶ Blaydes, 153.

⁷⁶⁷ Noha el-Hennawy, “Sisters Aspire to Equality within Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood,” *Al-Masry al-Youm*, March 15, 2011, accessed March 19, 2011, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/en/node/354388>

and a less-hardline Islamist image of the oldest Islamist movement in Egypt. However, el-Halafawy had the required qualifications and experience, and she was well known and respected in her district, so it was expected she would run with her husband's approval.⁷⁶⁸ Also, women activists and politicians, such as Mekarim el-Deiry and Amany Abul-Fadl, have proven capable, which further highlights the application of their individual efforts, and the absence of any agenda or plan put forth by the MB to prepare women for leadership positions or related activities. In addition to fighting against the conservative views of the MB, women in general and the Muslim Sisters in particular still have to tackle the traditionalist and overly patriarchal society that dominate everyday life in Egypt.

⁷⁶⁸ A.M.A Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 31, 2012.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Muslim Sisters' Electoral Activities During Elections

Both the Sadat and Mubarak regime used the MB and its influence to carry out their own agendas, much like that of the Nasser regime. Sadat used the MB and their Islamic rhetoric to counter Nasser's leftist influence, while Mubarak used the MB to counter the threat emanating from the militant Islamic groups. In spite of their banned status, the MB was able to survive in trying times due to the support of those authoritarian regimes. Moreover, since abandoning all forms of violence in the 1970s after the execution of Sayyid Qutb, the MB has experienced varying levels of both political freedom and control from both regimes. Participating in Egypt's elections was the only viable way for the MB to reassert its existence and influence, as well as present itself as an oppositional force, without openly challenging the existence or longevity of the regime. At the same time, the elections were their only available opportunity to practice and improve political skills they might need when and if they eventually attain political leadership. Blaydes asserts that this is a very important reason for the MB's presence in a variety of elections "including for leadership of university groups and professional syndicates, not just parliamentary contests."⁷⁶⁹

The 2000 Elections– Jihan el-Halafawy

The initial vote count indicated that el-Halafawy was winning, but an official decree was released cancelling the elections in the el-Raml constituency, which

⁷⁶⁹ Lisa Blaydes, *Elections and Distributive Politics in Mubarak's Egypt*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 152.

remained without representation in the People's Assembly for two years.⁷⁷⁰ El-Halafawy did not give up her rightful place in the People's Assembly as she fought the state in court for two years, until a Supreme Administrative Court finally decided to hold a by-election.⁷⁷¹ The Court gave the candidates only three weeks to prepare and on election day, an enormous security force was present.⁷⁷² El-Halafawy recounts:

“After two years, the Parliament remembered that there was a district in Alexandria that lacked a MP or representative. During the by-election, this one district in the whole of Egypt had an overwhelming presence and number of National Security forces. It was impossible for most of us to reach the ballot box to cast our vote, to the point that it turned into a competition - a running joke - where one would win a prize if they ever made it through the maze of security checkpoints to vote. The Forces were there to bar most people from voting, knowing fully well that they were voting for me and no one else.”⁷⁷³

Security officers also arrested el-Halafawy's legal team along with 101 of her supporters, clearing the way for public-sector workers who were brought in from outside the district on buses to vote for her rival who belonged to the NDP.⁷⁷⁴ At the end, the ruling party's candidate won the seat, as it was stipulated that all the votes collected by el-Halafawy, in the first round two years ago, were awarded to the NDP candidate during the second round of elections.⁷⁷⁵ Yet, the MB emerged as the largest opposition in Parliament, winning seventeen seats as independents despite the government-sanctioned harassment of the MB. Basically, the MB may have won more seats if it were not for the several arrests

⁷⁷⁰ AlBora'ei, 9.

⁷⁷¹ El-Ghobashy, "The Metamorphosis of The Egyptian Muslim Brothers," 373.

⁷⁷² J.H. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, February 6, 2012.

⁷⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁴ El-Ghobashy, "The Metamorphosis of The Egyptian Muslim Brothers," 373.

⁷⁷⁵ J.H. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, February 6, 2012.

that took place before the elections. Twenty MB leaders were placed on trial by a military court and several more members were arrested on unspecified charges.⁷⁷⁶

El-Halafawy's experience with the government was a trying one, but she was confident in the message she was sending to the Egyptian society and government with the backing of the MB's impressive organizational skills and overwhelming human cadres. Furthermore, el-Halafawy was adamant about showing that Islam awarded women political rights and that she had never experienced gender discrimination from the MB's male members during her thirty years in the movement.⁷⁷⁷ She has referred to the MB 1994 document in previous interviews and reiterates the MB's vision that a woman's primary role is in the family unit first, and in society, later.⁷⁷⁸ On the other hand, el-Halafawy said she disagreed with a portion of the MB's 1994 document in regards to women's roles in politics; as she believes that women are fit to occupy the position of state presidency. However, due to the existence of an authoritarian regime, el-Halafawy explained: "I don't like it, but it doesn't reach the point of my taking offence because the regime in Egypt is so confused. No men or women have the right to nominate themselves for the presidency."⁷⁷⁹ Additionally, el-Halafawy has been one of many MB members who had consistently asked for more official positions for the Muslim Sisters within the MB.

⁷⁷⁶ El-Ghobashy, "The Metamorphosis of The Egyptian Muslim Brothers," 387.

⁷⁷⁷ J.H. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, February 6, 2012.

⁷⁷⁸ El-Ghobashy, "The Metamorphosis of The Egyptian Muslim Brothers," 373.

⁷⁷⁹ Bradley, "Muslim Brotherhood reaches out to the Sisterhood."

The 2005 Elections – Makarim el-Deiry

The MB's 2005 election campaign used words such as 'democracy' and 'equal rights' to participate freely in elections, in an attempt to garner enough support and votes from the public. El-Deiry was quick to point out that the MB's views on democracy were not a tool to gain 'absolute freedom', as the MB desired a "freedom controlled by the values of religion."⁷⁸⁰ What made el-Deiry's run even more interesting is that she was registered to run against a well-known male NDP candidate and businessman in the Madinat Nasr/Masr El-Jadida district in Cairo - where the president of Egypt resided and casted his vote -, which was historically referred to as the 'president's constituency'.⁷⁸¹

When the votes were counted, it was revealed that el-Deiry was 1,500 votes ahead of her opponent Mustapha el-Sallab. However, despite getting almost double the votes of her opponent,⁷⁸² it was el-Sallab who was announced the winner of the seat representing the presidential constituency. This left many to conclude that the votes gained by the two candidates have been switched.⁷⁸³

Muslim Sister H.A.M. described the situation:

"the announcement started a protest by hundreds of el-Deiry's supporters - mostly women - in front of the vote-counting station. The crowds accused the government of vote-rigging and only dispersed when el-Deiry addressed the protestors, thanked them for their time and support and confirmed her strong belief that 'the flag of Islam will never fall.'"⁷⁸⁴

⁷⁸⁰ Sharon Otterman, "Female Islamist eyes Egyptian Parliament Seat," *IkhwanWeb*, November 5, 2005, accessed September 21, 2012, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=5744&ref=search.php>

⁷⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 18 and A.A.K Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 22, 2012.

⁷⁸² H.A.M. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 24, 2012.

⁷⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸⁴ Abdel-Latif, 18.

Nevertheless, el-Dairy's legal team headed to Egypt's national judicial courts and filed their case at the Court of Cassation. Although they won the case, the Court opted not to pass the decision. At the time, the Court had the right to choose to pass a verdict or refrain from doing so, depending on the preference of the judicial council.⁷⁸⁵ In this instance, it exercised that right by refraining from passing the decision.

The 2005 elections resulted in only six women winning seats.⁷⁸⁶ The low number of female representatives in Parliament was yet again due to the failure of all parties to place women on their party lists. The women who won seats ran as independents without the support or help of any party, campaign or familial ties. In effect, female representation decreased from two and a half percent in 2000 to two percent in 2005. With voter registration at thirty percent or less before the January 25 revolution, the MB was well aware that every vote counted. On election days, the women of the MB were often assigned with the task of trying to deter or decrease incidents of tampering with the ballot boxes.⁷⁸⁷ Furthermore, reports of MB supporters - both men and women - climbing over walls and fences of polling stations through the use of ladders were astounding. In several cases, men and women would lie down on the road to deter the NDP from bussing in their supporters from other constituencies or districts as was previously done in the 2000 elections during el-Halafawy's nomination. Additionally, Dr. Saad Eddin Ibrahim reported from one city, in reference to the MB voters or Islamist supporters, stating that the number of voters from each

⁷⁸⁵ H.A.M. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 24, 2012.

⁷⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁷ Blaydes and el-Tarouty, 379.

gender was almost equal, even more slightly in favour of the women.⁷⁸⁸ Most of the female voters were over forty years old while the percentage of young voters and senior voters (younger than thirty and older than sixty years old) were quite scarce in comparison. Moreover, Ibrahim described the women's determination to cast their vote as if it were a patriotic duty or a military order.⁷⁸⁹ Ibrahim deduced that the middle-aged Islamic-oriented women voters (between 40-60 years of age) are those women whose life phases of pregnancy, childbearing and child-rearing are behind them, leaving them less constrained by housework and motherly duties; and allowing them a chance to be more politically active than other women in different age groups.⁷⁹⁰ Incidentally, Ibrahim's conclusion is in keeping with the MB's view of a woman's role and duties in an Islamic society. Moreover, Blaydes and el-Tarouty describe the vision of veiled women supporting an Islamist candidate and movement as a powerful one, as it encourages other women to vote in the same manner and support the same organization or party.⁷⁹¹ Blaydes and el-Tarouty further explain that "the willingness of Islamist women to make personal sacrifices to support Brotherhood candidates creates a strong emotional pull for other Brotherhood sympathizers to support the cause."⁷⁹²

⁷⁸⁸ Dr. Saad Eddin Ibrahim, a prominent sociologist, was reporting on the voting procedures in the city of Mansoura, where the majority of the women flocking to the polls were veiled, thereby indicating their affiliation and support towards Islamist movements. Saad Eddin Ibrahim, "Al-Akhawat al-Muslamat wa Intikhabat 2005" [The Muslim Sisters and the 2005 Election], *Al-Masry al-Youm*, December 10, 2005, accessed August 15, 2012, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/en/node/354388>

⁷⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁹¹ Blaydes, 161.

⁷⁹² Ibid.

The 2010 Elections – The NDP Wins 83 Percent of Seats⁷⁹³

In hindsight, there were numerous reasons for the uprising in 2011. Unjustified actions by the government against the MB since its impressive win in the 2005 elections and the government's overall effort to undermine the freedoms of its people such as significantly decreasing freedom of speech and opinion by shutting down several TV stations and newspapers. The highly rigged 2010 elections⁷⁹⁴ concluded with the NDP gaining most of the seats, the Wafd party serving as the opposition with their win of minimal seats, and the MB losing all 88 seats it won in the 2005 elections, thereby being stripped of any representation in the Egyptian government. After the elections and the encounter with the regime's tactics in eliminating its opposition, one had to ask the question: What was next for the most organized and effective opposition movement?

The number of women in Parliament did not exceed fifteen between the years of 2000-2010. In an attempt to understand why the low number of female representation is a recurring theme in Egypt's Parliament, a survey was performed to assess women's opinions, where 38 percent reject the concept of gender equality. This result indicates the depth of cultural and social problems from which the Egyptian woman suffers; it also sheds light on the magnitude of the challenge ahead.⁷⁹⁵ Furthermore, the Egyptian society does not seem ready

⁷⁹³ Ashraf Swelam, "Egypt's 2010 Parliamentary Elections: The Landslide," *Egypt's International Economic Forum Occasional Papers 2* (January 2011), accessed August 18, 2012, <http://www.yale.edu/worldfellows/fellows/documents/OccasionalPaper2Egypt2010ParliamentaryElectionsTheLandslide.pdf>

⁷⁹⁴ "Brotherhood Win No Seats."

⁷⁹⁵ Amr el-Chobaky, "Al Mar'a wal 'ahzab al masryia: Mushkilat al tamthil wal musharaka al siyasiya," [Women and Egyptian political Parties: the Problems of Representation and Political Participation] in *Halet al Mar'aa fi Misr: Dirasa fi mustwayat al tamthil bil manasib al qiyadiya*,

to accept a woman or a Coptic citizen in other political positions such as the President or the Vice President in Egypt. In June 2010, security forces prevented access to the polling stations and none of the MB's fifteen candidates were elected. The opposition parties saw this as a strong indication of how poorly they would perform if they decided to participate in the parliamentary elections. Nevertheless, the MB continued its mission to participate and contend for seats against the all-powerful NDP. This was not anticipated seeing that nearly a quarter of its candidates has been disqualified and their main slogan - Islam is the solution - has been declared illegal.

In the face of internal dispute within the MB regarding the decision to participate in the 2010 elections, the MB nominated 135 candidates seats (26 percent of the total seats) that included fifteen women contesting the 64 women's quota seats, as opposed to the 2005 elections in which they contested 36 percent of the total seats.⁷⁹⁶ A report by the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (ECWR) published a report prior to the elections entitled "Egyptian Women between the Anvil of Political Parties and the Hammer of the Quota," that stated that the MB "nominated women for the People's Assembly elections after internal polling within the Brotherhood; 95 percent agreed on women participating."⁷⁹⁷ Sobhi el-Salah, a MB leader and MP assured the public that the MB would contest one-third of the parliamentary seats. Furthermore, el-Salah explained that the MB's participation in an obviously fraudulent election was mandatory. He

[Women's Status in Egypt: A Study of the Levels of Representation in Leadership Positions] ed. Amani Al-Tawil (Cairo: Centre for Political and Strategic Studies, 2009), 128.

⁷⁹⁶ Hamzawy and Dunne, "Brotherhood Enters Elections in a Weakened State."

⁷⁹⁷ "Increased Number of Women Participation in Polls," *IkhwanWeb*, November 1, 2010, accessed November 20, 2012, <http://ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=26998>

explained that if it were not for their participation, "the [current] system would have gone on in this tricky deceptive manner. Refraining from participating means [they] surrender to the status quo."⁷⁹⁸ The 2010 elections saw over 4,000 registered candidates competing for the 508 elected seats of the PA; 378 of them were women competing for the quota seats; an impressive feat when seen in comparison to the 127 women who ran in the 2005 elections.⁷⁹⁹ However, due to the government barring the MB and its candidates from the elections, the MB only managed to register a little over 100 of its candidates, which included only five female candidates, thereby putting forward the lowest number of female candidates of all the political parties.⁸⁰⁰

With the arrival of election day, security forces and the MB were engaged in violent scuffles in six districts in one day. Thirty police officers were wounded and 250 MB members and supporters were arrested.⁸⁰¹ As a result of the violence that ensued during the first round of elections, the MB decided to boycott the run-off elections.⁸⁰² Many voting stations were closed down at the last minute in areas known for its MB affiliations, and the presence of the military was evident at every station.⁸⁰³ At the end, the calls for boycott had little or no effect on the election outcome. In addition to the vote rigging tactics of Mubarak's

⁷⁹⁸ Chris Stanton, "Who Wins from Boycotting Egypt's Elections?" *The National*, November 26, 2010, accessed November 28, 2010, <http://www.thenational.ae/news/worldwide/middle-east/who-wins-from-boycotting-egypts-elections?pageCount=0>

⁷⁹⁹ Amr Hamzawy and Michele Dunne, "The Egyptian Parliamentary Elections: Facts and Figures," *Carnegie Commentary*, November 28, 2010, accessed November 20, 2012, <http://egyptelections.carnegieendowment.org/2010/11/28/the-egyptian-parliamentary-elections-facts-and-figures>

⁸⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰¹ Ali, 96.

⁸⁰² Helena Cobban, "The Men of Qasr el-Aini Street," *Foreign Policy*, January 31, 2011, accessed November 2, 2011, http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/01/31/the_men_of_qasr_el_aini_street

⁸⁰³ "Brotherhood Win No Seats."

regime, voter turnout was low at 27 percent.⁸⁰⁴ Even though many Egyptians boycotted the 2010 elections, Dr. Amr el-Chobaky stated that the low voter turnout was not primarily motivated by a political stance; the truth is that people had little or no faith in the 30-year old system.⁸⁰⁵ This was evident in the less than thirty percent turnout in the 2005 elections to vote, and the less than ten percent turnout in the 2010 *Shura* Council elections.⁸⁰⁶

The 2011/2012 People's Assembly Elections⁸⁰⁷

At first, the MB engaged the first free election since its inception, as an organization that followed the same tactics of “participation, not domination” starting with contesting one-third of the Parliament seats. Brown discovered that this number was

“a direct carryover from the ceiling the movement had set under the old regime, where seeking more than one-third of the seats would have given it a veto over constitutional changes and thus, in its own eyes, been tantamount to seeking a seat at the table of political authority.”⁸⁰⁸

In essence, the MB wanted to play it safe while also ensuring that it wins enough seats to alter the direction of the nation's future in regards to the constitutional amendments. However, as the months passed, the MB became more ambitious as it gradually became aware of the level of unpreparedness of the leftist and

⁸⁰⁴ For a comparison of voter turnout at parliamentary elections over the past 30 years, see “Voter turnout data for Egypt,” *International Democracy for Electoral Assistance*, accessed March 20, 2013, <http://www.idea.int/vt/countryview.cfm?id=69>

⁸⁰⁵ A.C. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, February 6, 2012.

⁸⁰⁶ Stanton, “Who Wins from Boycotting Egypt's Elections?”

⁸⁰⁷ Refer to Appendix E for PA election results.

⁸⁰⁸ Brown, “When Victory Becomes an Option,” 5.

liberal parties; so much more ambitious that they declared that they would vie for fifty percent of the parliament seats.⁸⁰⁹

The reasons were different but almost all female MB candidates were placed at the bottom of the party list. In effect, an electoral seat that receives 30-35 percent of the votes means that three candidates on that list would secure seats in Parliament.⁸¹⁰ Being placed at the bottom of the list drastically reduces the chances of garnering at least 30 percent of the list's votes; thereby reducing the number of women in Parliament. The situation was the same with other non-Islamists and Islamist parties. The MB had a lot invested in the parliamentary elections soon after the issuance of the SCAF's "Constitutional Declaration" in March 2011. Article 33 stated that

"the People's Assembly will assume the authority to legislate and determine the public policy of the state, the general plan for economic and social development, and the public budget of the state. It will also oversee the work of the executive branch."⁸¹¹

As a result, just like every other political party, the MB chose to play it safe and not place their female candidates - despite the high level of competence and experience in the political game among some of them - in the upper portion of the party lists.⁸¹²

The PA elections that took place in 2011 delivered a shock to the Egyptian masses and the world. With sixty percent of the seats allotted to Islamist

⁸⁰⁹ Maggie Michael, "Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood Eyes Big Political Role."

⁸¹⁰ "Elections in Egypt: Analysis of the 2011 Parliamentary Electoral System," *Middle East and North Africa International Foundation for Electoral Systems* (November 1, 2011): 10, accessed November 25, 2012, http://www.ifes.org/~media/Files/Publications/White%20PaperReport/2011/Analysis_of_Egypt's_2011_Parliamentary_Electoral_System.pdf

⁸¹¹ Brown, "When Victory Becomes Option," 8.

⁸¹² "Women and the Arab Spring: Taking their Place?" 20.

movements,⁸¹³ the international community was forced to reassess its view of Egypt and entertain the possibility of an Islamist majority in Parliament that could change the course of Egypt's political history and geopolitical standing. What was even more shocking was the low female representation as a majority of these elected few were FJP members. The representation of women in Parliament was calculated at two percent – resulting in one of the lowest representation of female politicians in the world's governments.⁸¹⁴ Such results were in line with the concerns of feminists that the call for women's equality would be disregarded in favour of more pressing issues such as national and economic security after the revolution.⁸¹⁵ That said, the FJP did successfully mobilize and educate Muslim Sisters, to represent the party in both the elections and in Parliament.

The Democratic Alliance, which consisted of ten parties - including the FJP - had 80 women running in the PA elections; 76 of these women belonged to the FJP.⁸¹⁶ The minority Salafist movement and its associated groups had ridden on the Brotherhood's coattails and had started to mobilize to form a political group and a political agenda prior to the elections.⁸¹⁷ Despite previously berating the MB for taking part in a political system, the Salafists proceeded to engage

⁸¹³ S. Ausaf Saied Vasfi, "Islamic Emergence in W-Asia & N-Africa" *Radiance Weekly*, December 30, 2011, accessed January 3, 2012, <http://www.radianceweekly.com/286/8025/muslim-demand-for-political-empowermentreservation-in-legislatures-or-proportional-electoral-system/2011-12-25/arab-spring/story-detail/islamic-emergence-in-w-asia--n-africa.html>

⁸¹⁴ Sholkamy.

⁸¹⁵ El-Sadda.

⁸¹⁶ Leila.

⁸¹⁷ Hamdi Dabbash and Hany ElWaziry. "Brotherhood Leader: Media Highlights Mistakes to Disparage Group," *Al-Masry al-Youm*, May 28, 2011, accessed May 29, 2011, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/en/node/454611>

politically themselves in a system that was not governed by the laws of Islam in their most fundamental form.⁸¹⁸

The Islamist faction of this electoral race managed to empower and support Egyptian women better than any leftist or secular party.⁸¹⁹ However, the events that led to this representation within the PA were far from simple. The new election law stipulates that within every electoral race and within each Proportional Representation list, one female candidate must be included, but it is not necessary to place women in winnable positions on the list.⁸²⁰ Despite the fact that the FJP initially placed a large number of its female candidates in the top half of the list, a lot of the more politically-experienced women were placed in the bottom half of the list – due to agreements with other parties within the alliance, and due to the size and importance of the districts where they were running.⁸²¹ For instance, Dr. Manal Aboul-Hassan was placed fifth on the electoral list in the Masr el-Jadida district. Her name was originally listed as the third candidate, but was moved lower on the list due to the alliance that the FJP made with other parties such as the Labor Party, which desired the third position on the Democratic Alliance List.⁸²² Ms. Nagafa Abdel-Mawla was sixth on the same list. However, Wafaa Mustafa Mashhour, daughter of the sixth Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, was on top of the FJP list for the district of Assiut and Maha

⁸¹⁸ Hendawi, "Islamists Look for Gains in Egypt's Freer Politics."

⁸¹⁹ The interviewee who was running in the People's Assembly election stated that each of the candidates received training and attended workshops, and were assigned a media spokesperson. O.K., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 18, 2012.

⁸²⁰ Leila.

⁸²¹ M.A.H., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 15, 2012.

⁸²² Ibid.

Aboul-Ezz⁸²³ was second on the list. The Sisters fared well in Alexandria as well, where the FJP placed a female candidate third on the party list.⁸²⁴

The FJP were better equipped and ready to take on the challenges of the first democratic elections to take place in Egypt.⁸²⁵ The FJP was able to provide the necessary training and support, and was better prepared to challenge the secular and liberal parties that might have had more political exposure and experience than the Sisters of the MB. The FJP's confidence in its female candidates was obvious in the numbers that joined the election race and the percentage of women who occupied the top of the lists. Unfortunately, women affiliated with other parties did not fare well since their parties had decided to place the female candidates at the bottom of the lists. The Reform and Development Party placed only one woman in the seventh place on its list. The Free Egypt Party placed its only female candidate last. Only ten women were on the el-Wafd Party list – which is affiliated with the oldest political party in Egypt's history.⁸²⁶ On the other hand, the Salafist el-Nour Party had fifteen women running in the elections. During the run-off elections between individual candidates, the MB won almost ten times more seats than Salafist parties.⁸²⁷ Moreover, many Egyptians voted for el-Nour Party thinking they were casting

⁸²³ It is interesting to note that Maha Aboul-Ezz also ran for a seat in the Legislative Assembly, when she did not gather enough votes during the People's Assembly elections.

⁸²⁴ Leila.

⁸²⁵ N. A., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 30, 2012.

⁸²⁶ Leila.

⁸²⁷ Khalil al-Anani, "The Illusive Rise of Islamists," *Foreign Policy*, December 8, 2011, accessed January 31, 2012, http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/12/08/the_illusive_rise_of_islamists

their vote for the well-known Islamist movement of the MB.⁸²⁸ During the FJP's campaigns, Muslim Sister G.R. witnessed the following:

“During the first and second phases of voting, I was stationed at the Nasr City area of Cairo and in Giza governorate, where many people insisted that the MB had two political parties: the FJP and el-Nour. The same group of people thought that the FJP already had so many votes, so they felt it was the right thing to do to cast some votes for the other MB party: el-Nour, as both are Islamist parties at the end of the day.”⁸²⁹

Some have argued that if it were not for the competition from el-Nour Party, the FJP would have gained more votes.⁸³⁰ After a long series of complicated calculations and fractioning of seats between party lists and individual seats, women occupied only eight seats out of 480.⁸³¹ The remaining three women that joined the Assembly were appointed by the SCAF.⁸³²

Soon after the PA elections, Amnesty International consulted all the political parties that participated in the elections regarding their views on certain laws and rights such as the death penalty and women's rights. Colm O'Gorman, Executive Director of Amnesty International Ireland, stated that “some of the parties refused to commit to equal rights for women. With a handful of women taking up seats in the new parliament, there remain huge obstacles to women

⁸²⁸ M.A., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, March 22, 2012 and S.S., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, February 1, 2012.

⁸²⁹ G.R., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 17, 2012.

⁸³⁰ Ibid.

⁸³¹ “Egypt: Majlis Al-Chaab (People's Assembly),” *Inter-Parliamentary Union*, accessed February 23, 2013, <http://www.ipu.org/parline/reports/2097.htm>

⁸³² “Results of Egypt's People's Assembly Elections: Guide to Egypt's Transition,” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, accessed February 1, 2012, <http://egyptelections.carnegieendowment.org/2012/01/25/results-of-egypt%E2%80%99s-people%E2%80%99s-assembly-elections>

playing a full role in Egyptian political life.”⁸³³ Amnesty International’s manifesto aimed to enlist the political parties to a ten-point agenda, which included a list of pledges to ensure that complete rights would be attained for all citizens in this new era of governing. Only two parties (the Egyptian Social Democratic Party and the Popular Socialist Alliance Party) agreed to all the pledges listed.⁸³⁴ Moreover, most parties signed the eighth pledge regarding putting an end to gender and religion based discrimination. However, a number of parties claimed that they could not “sign up to Amnesty International’s call for an end to discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.”⁸³⁵ The Amnesty International report explained that several parties were not entirely in agreement with the ninth pledge, which called for “women’s rights to be protected, including for women to be given equal rights in marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance.”⁸³⁶ The reason given for their reservations was that *sharia* law was not in cohesion with the pledge and its specific requirements. The FJP, the majority party in the PA and SC, was one of three parties not to respond ‘substantively’, despite what Amnesty termed ‘considerable efforts’ to seek its views.⁸³⁷

⁸³³ “Egypt’s Political Parties Fall Short on Women’s Rights, Death Penalty,” *Amnesty International*, January 24, 2012, accessed October 1, 2012, <http://amnesty.ie/news/egypt%E2%80%99s-political-parties-fall-short-women%E2%80%99s-rights-death-penalty>

⁸³⁴ Ibid.

⁸³⁵ Ibid.

⁸³⁶ Ibid.

⁸³⁷ Ibid.

The SC elections attracted less attention, due to the common belief that the Council was not important to Egypt's government. Despite this lack of attention generally bestowed on the SC elections, as many believed that the SC lacked legislative powers or functionality,⁸³⁹ the FJP was fully invested in succeeding. Most of the lists for each district were short, where the majority of the FJP female candidates were placed in the number three slot out of four places on every list.⁸⁴⁰ Ms. Maha Aboul-Ezz, head of 'Ūsraty' (My family) Centre and an FJP member, ran again in the SC elections, where she was number three out of four places on the party's list for her district.⁸⁴¹

The same practice was applied to FJP member Ms. Amal Abdel-Kareem. In bigger districts or areas, FJP candidate Dr. Omaima Kamel was placed in the fifth slot of the party's list; still considered the bottom of the list.⁸⁴² On the other hand, el-Saqqari was given priority, where she was placed third on a list consisting of four places; as the FJP's allied party - el-Hadara party - occupied the fourth place.⁸⁴³ The FJP managed to win 105 seats out of 180 in the SC elections, as Dr. Susan Saad Zaghloul - a FJP member - was announced as the

⁸³⁸ Refer to Appendix F for SC election results.

⁸³⁹ Salem Mostafa Kamel, "Shura Council Elections See Low Turnout and Voter Apathy," *Atlantic Council*, February 2, 2012, accessed April 15, 2012, <http://www.acus.org/egyptsource/shura-council-elections-see-low-turnout-and-voter-apathy>

⁸⁴⁰ M.A.E., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, February 1, 2012 and S.S., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, February 1, 2012.

⁸⁴¹ M.A.E., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, February 1, 2012.

⁸⁴² O.K., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 18, 2012.

⁸⁴³ "Susan Saad Zaghloul, the Only Woman Winner of Individual Seats in Egyptian Elections," *IkhwanWeb*, February 25, 2012, accessed March 3, 2012, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=29716&ref=search.php>

first woman to win in the elections as the counting of votes took place.⁸⁴⁴ In the end, the Islamist parties won a combined 83 percent of the contested seats.⁸⁴⁵

The preceding survey proves that women's empowerment is almost non-existent in political parties; as women were only elected due to the presence of the quota system. Otherwise, most political parties believed that placing women on the party's lists would not garner enough votes.⁸⁴⁶ Dr. Dina Shehata explains that the NDP had a women's agenda due to Suzanne Mubarak's efforts, while other parties did not factor in women's participation outside the scope of the quota system.⁸⁴⁷ Furthermore, with the dissolution of the former First Lady's initiative, the structure that women's rights activists took so long to build has all but collapsed post-revolution, due to the NCW's choice to work within the government and through the application of governmental means - thereby relying on practices of state feminism. Shehata concludes that women activists face a new challenge in the post-revolution era, where they must rebuild and garner support through the help of NGOs, and by engaging other social movements to re-establish its objectives and goals.⁸⁴⁸

Abdel-Latif, explains that the MB leadership - usually comprised of the most senior members - has a Salafist and conservative view regarding women's

⁸⁴⁴ "FJP Press Release # 13 – Egyptian Shura Council Election Results," *The Freedom and Justice Party Official Website*, February 23, 2012, accessed April 15, 2012, <http://www.fjponline.com/article.php?id=453&ref=search.php>

⁸⁴⁵ "Results of Shura Council Elections," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, accessed February 1, 2012, <http://egyptelections.carnegieendowment.org/2012/02/29/results-of-shura-council-elections>

⁸⁴⁶ El-Chobaky, 134.

⁸⁴⁷ D.S. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, February 7, 2012.

⁸⁴⁸ Ibid.

activities; in that it should be kept to a minimum.⁸⁴⁹ Members of the Guidance Bureau did not agree regarding whether women should occupy leadership positions such as the presidency.⁸⁵⁰ For example, a male MB member who acted as the head of one of the Muslim Sisters Divisions in the Eastern Cairo region for ten years, describes his political and social views as being conservative, where he argues that women in Egypt need to work within the confines of what is permissible in this patriarchal society.⁸⁵¹ He stated that as long as women abide by social and cultural constructs set forth for them by society, they will not face any major obstacles.⁸⁵² Moreover, the older generation explained that their decision to exclude women from leadership positions was due to “a ‘religious choice’ (*khayaan feqhee*) and a ‘social reality’,”⁸⁵³ while the middle generation - who were also senior members within the organization - did not agree with their viewpoints. This was not the first time the different generations seem to hold different opinions on important issues. Following the violent reaction of the government against the MB in the Mubarak years, a deep rift began to form between the generations.⁸⁵⁴ The older generation wanted to halt all electoral activities and revert to the organization’s original mission; to continue and expand its *da’wa* activities. However, the younger generation wanted to respond to the government’s crackdown in a different way, Older and younger generations could not agree on how to represent the MB in the public eye, especially when it came

⁸⁴⁹ Abdel-Latif, 9.

⁸⁵⁰ Ibid. and O.B. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 20, 2012.

⁸⁵¹ A.M.A Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 31, 2012.

⁸⁵² Ibid.

⁸⁵³ Abdel-Latif, 9.

⁸⁵⁴ Linjakumpu, 90- 92.

to issues concerning the Coptic minority and women.⁸⁵⁵ Out of this frustration, al-Wasat Party (Centrist Party) was formed by young Brothers who grew disillusioned by the negative image the MB had projected in the Egyptian society, and sought to create an image that was neither Islamist, liberal, socialist or capitalist.⁸⁵⁶

El-Deiry's comments during her 2005 electoral campaign raised a few doubts as to whether the Sisters do indeed desire a more public role and greater responsibilities amongst the MB men. El-Deiry argued that "violence against women and children in Western societies stems from going against the idea that men are superior to women."⁸⁵⁷ Furthermore, she does not see her previous comment as branding her unfit to champion women's rights as she vowed to fight against "men's abuse of their superiority" if she was elected.⁸⁵⁸ In her opinion, her acknowledgment and acceptance of men's superiority is not at all destructive to the women's rights movement as long as children and future generations are taught that "the superiority of men also means the full respect of women's civic rights and dignity."⁸⁵⁹ Furthermore, some Muslim Sisters like el-Deiry believed that if they attempt to assert their presence and expertise in an effort to join the men in higher administrative and executive positions, it may liken them to the

⁸⁵⁵ Bruce K. Rutherford, "What Do Egypt's Islamists Want? Moderate Islam and the Rise of Islamic Constitutionalism," *Middle East Journal* 60, no. 4 (Autumn 2006): 720, 725, accessed November 1, 2010, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4330319>

⁸⁵⁶ Joshua Stacher, "Post-Islamist Rumbblings in Egypt: The Emergence of the Wasat Party," *Middle East Journal* 56, no. 3 (Summer, 2002): 418-420, accessed November 1, 2010, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4329786>,

⁸⁵⁷ Mona Salem, "Woman candidate for Egypt Parliament Holds Men Superior," *IkhwanWeb*, October 27, 2005, accessed September 21, 2012, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=5815&ref=search.php>

⁸⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁹ Ibid.

much-despised Western feminists.⁸⁶⁰ As mentioned before, these movements are perceived by Islamists as efforts to free women from the gender-assigned roles and constraints, such as their duties within the family, which the Sisters have consistently argued, may lead to individualistic ideologies that promote the degradation of an Islamic society.⁸⁶¹

The role and position of women within and outside of the MB is still a point of contention among the different generations existing within the MB. Yet, the MB's general view on women's political participation was more conservative from a religious standpoint than other political entities in Egypt before the 2011 revolution. Nevertheless, it is not only the political stance of the Muslim Sisters that is up for investigation or scrutiny. Women in secular parties also lack representation in their parties, where they either have no decision-making power at all or they enjoy limited power at best.⁸⁶²

With the changes in Egypt's current political climate, and the formation of a new government free of Mubarak's influences, the MB has been presented with new challenges. The reformation of the MB's agenda in the absence of a restrictive government and the distraction of the security apparatuses by national security issues, can be both beneficial and detrimental to the Muslim Sisters' position and their desire to adopt more visible and serious roles. Still, the MB may have only fielded the Muslim Sisters in the post-Mubarak elections 1- to improve their negative image in Egypt's streets as an Islamist and conservative

⁸⁶⁰ Abdel-Latif and Ottaway, 7.

⁸⁶¹ Ibid.

⁸⁶² Valentine M. Moghadam, "Towards Gender Equality in The Arab/Middle East Region: Islam, Culture, and Feminist Activism," *Occasional Paper for United Nations Development Programme*, Chicago (2004): 34.

movement or 2- to fulfil the quota system that was in place during the 2011 elections. The challenge remains that the MB's frame of reference is still the Islamic frame of reference, and the concern is that they may still depend on the dated patriarchal interpretations of *hadiths* and *sunna* on issues relating to women's rights. Tackling women's issues and realities in today's Egypt solely within an Islamic framework, may not provide the MB organization with a comprehensive idea of the challenges women face; resulting in a limited knowledge of the serious problems women face in Egypt.⁸⁶³

⁸⁶³ A.T. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, March 26, 2012.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Muslim Sisters Post-Elections

The Muslim Sisters face obstacles posed by both the traditionalist outlook of Egypt's society and the conservative environment in the MB. The MB organization is divided in terms of views regarding the political participation of women. While some members believe that the Sisters' most important duty is to be carried out at home nurturing young minds, others insist that the Sisters should be treated in the same manner as the MB in terms of opportunities to participate in elections; where competence and qualifications are the deciding factors not gender.⁸⁶⁴ Abdel-Latif explains that the middle generation's opposition was because the older generation "did not take into consideration the reality and context of contemporary Egypt and that it violated the principle of a civilian state, to which the MB has said it was committed."⁸⁶⁵ Gamal Heshmat, a MB member and former MP, explained that the older generation's stance "goes against the principle of citizenship, which makes everyone equal before the law and confers the right to be nominated and elected as a head of state."⁸⁶⁶ Yet, the fact remains that while the men were continually rounded up by security forces before and during elections, the women were responsible for campaigning and overseeing other electoral obligations.⁸⁶⁷ Unfortunately, in many cases, the arrests continued in the postelection phase of the MB's electoral activities.

⁸⁶⁴ M.M.A. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 15, 2012.

⁸⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁶ Abdel-Latif, 9.

⁸⁶⁷ S.U. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 30, 2012.

The 2000 elections succeeded in garnering international attention. The Islamist MB organization's effort at trying to reinvent its image in Egypt and abroad was spearheaded by the running of one female candidate. El-Halafawy's struggle and steadfastness, in the face of continuous harassment and obstacles, only fed her resolve to continue her campaign trail. El-Halafawy might have lost in 2000, but the idea of the Muslim Sisters having descriptive and substantive representation took root and began to grow, as the MB readied itself for the 2005 elections; which ended in the MB winning the greatest number of seats under Mubarak's rule.

With the impressive win of the MB in the 2005 elections, came a new wave of arrests and interrogations directed at MB members.⁸⁶⁸ Such incidents put the Muslim Sisters yet again in an accommodationist position as they placed the needs of the MB before the concerns of its female cadres and their agendas for female empowerment. In turn, the Muslim Sisters Division organized a campaign led by the daughters and wives of the 22 detained MB male members, to raise public awareness of the government's unjust treatment of MB members.⁸⁶⁹ However, their activities during that trying period can be described as the political mobilization of forces in the face of an authoritarian regime. Such actions further undermined the MB's argument that women are unable to occupy positions of power, especially that of the president, and that they needed protection from the aggressive security forces. The Sisters were in the line of fire,

⁸⁶⁸ Marina Ottaway and Amr Hamzawy, "Islamists in Politics: The Dynamics of Participation," *Carnegie Papers, Middle East Program*, no. 98 (2008): 15.

⁸⁶⁹ Abdel-Latif, 19.

without regard for their personal safety, whenever the MB deemed it necessary and pivotal to the organization's political goals.

As the Sisters were assigned more public positions and responsibilities, it highlighted the desire of some of the Sisters to take on such roles in spite of constraints by both the MB and gender-biased societal pressures. In effect, the Sisters organized street protests and sit-ins in 2006, and gathered finances to pay for their husbands'/fathers'/brothers' lawyers and provide support for the prisoners' families, as well as organized visits to those detained.⁸⁷⁰ In terms of political activism, the Muslim Sisters were visible forces on university campuses as well. When the state and its security apparatus banned MB candidates from participating in the student elections at Cairo University, all students belonging to the MB - both male and female - organized a series of demonstrations. To further cement their power and influence on campus, the MB formed a parallel assembly, 'The Free Students Union', to be able to nominate their own candidates alongside others who wished to join. Moreover, the first elected head of the Free Student Union was a young Muslim Sister.⁸⁷¹

In the summer of 2007, several MB MPs were arrested under the charge of "giving instructions to women and using them in political activities."⁸⁷² Abdel-Latif points out that the MB was accused of "using" the MB women, and it was not perceived as possible that the Muslim Sisters would have willingly participated in electoral activities.⁸⁷³ Such an accusation reflected the view of the

⁸⁷⁰ Abdel-Latif, 19.

⁸⁷¹ Ibid.

⁸⁷² Ibid., 13.

⁸⁷³ Ibid.

government and that of many non-Islamist movements and organizations of the MB's treatment of women. Moreover, a senior security official delivered a warning to the MB's General Guide highlighting the MB's "deliberate policy of placing women in street protests."⁸⁷⁴ According to Abdel-Latif's research, the MB received several more warnings of the same nature, where the security apparatus made it clear that the Muslim Sisters would no longer be "beyond the reach of the police" if their street campaigning strategies were to persist.⁸⁷⁵ Consequently, the Muslim Sisters and the MB faced an incident that had not occurred since the Nasser regime. Three young women of the MB were arrested and detained for three hours at a police station in the City of Tanta after distributing leaflets supporting the MB's candidate for Egypt's SC midterm elections. This incident was met with outrage from the MB organization which condemned the government for its violation of the women's rights to campaign for their candidates. The government asserted that the women were arrested for dispersing religious rhetoric for political reasons, which was illegal. The incident was deemed unacceptable by the MB stating that the arrest of the Muslim Sisters was a 'red line' that must never be crossed.⁸⁷⁶ A MB member rationalized that a patriarchal society such as Egypt's may categorize and limit women in regards to their roles and responsibilities within a society, but the women's protection is the

⁸⁷⁴ Abdel-Latif, 5.

⁸⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁶ Hossam el-Hendy, "Detention of MB Female Activists may Backfire," *IkhwanWeb*, June 10, 2007, accessed November 1, 2010, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=1376&ref=search.php>

responsibility of all men; whether MB members, security officials or police officers.⁸⁷⁷

In the time that the MB occupied 88 seats in Egypt's parliament from 2005-2010, the MB members failed to stop or modify any piece of legislation that was presented.⁸⁷⁸ It has been considered that the Mubarak regime had struck a deal with the MB to award them enough seats to give the organization sufficient presentation in Parliament without posing a real threat to the Mubarak regime.⁸⁷⁹ If such speculations were true, then the tactics implemented would have also served Mubarak's international interests by showing the international community an image where the regime is more preferable than an Islamist takeover; this would discourage international players from pushing for political reform in Egypt.⁸⁸⁰ As mentioned in Chapter Three, the MB released a draft of its party platform in 2007 on the off chance that they were allowed to form a legal political party. Once again, the MB affirmed its stance against women or Coptic Christians occupying the highest position of power. However, the main divergence from the 1994 document was the MB specifying the position of Egypt's presidency as opposed to the general reference to the no longer applicable position of *el-imama el-kubra*. The clause stated that the "duties and responsibilities assumed by the head of state, such as army commanding, are in

⁸⁷⁷ El-Hendy.

⁸⁷⁸ "Egypt's Muslim Brothers: Confrontation or Integration?", 7 and Samer Shehata and Joshua Stacher, "The Brotherhood Goes to Parliament," *Middle East Report*, no. 240 (2006): 33-34, accessed November 15, 2010, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25164744>

⁸⁷⁹ "Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood Made Secret Deal with Mubarak Government During Protests," *The Global Muslim Brotherhood Daily Report*, March 31, 2011, accessed August 17, 2012, <http://globalmbreport.org/?p=4144>

⁸⁸⁰ Amr Hamzawy, "Opposition in Egypt Performance in the Presidential Election and Prospects for the Parliamentary Elections," *Carnegie Endowment For International Peace* (October 2005): 5.

contradiction with the socially acceptable roles for women.”⁸⁸¹ The MB party platform had a specific section entitled “Family and Women” that focused on the reforms and improvements the MB aimed to achieve in regards to empowering women in Egypt, both at home and at the workplace. The program included promises, presented by the MB if they were to form a political party and represent a majority in Parliament, such as: criminalizing both verbal and physical forms of violence against women, criminalizing forced marriages, and creating a law that punishes those who did not abide by those laws.⁸⁸² However, while the MB party platform discussed its intentions to ensure that women are being empowered in the public and social life, the platform lacked the necessary steps and plans to guarantee women’s empowerment. The MB did not seem to fully realize the concept of women’s empowerment and the changes that need to take place within Egypt’s legislature and executive entities.⁸⁸³

The tactics that the Mubarak government implemented, to further suppress the impact of the MB and other Islamist influences, mainly focused on passing new laws or amending old ones to guarantee that the MB has little or no chance to perform well in the 2010 elections. The Mubarak regime amended Article I of the constitution to define the country as a “state of citizenship”, thereby eliminating any reference to Islam as “the religion of the state”⁸⁸⁴ - an article that resulted due to the MB’s influence during Sadat’s reign. Prior to passing this amendment, the MB members and lawmakers walked out of the

⁸⁸¹ Abdel-Latif, 1.

⁸⁸² Aliaa Abdel Aziz Dawoud, “Utilizing Mass Media in the Political Empowerment of Egyptian Women, ” Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Westminster, (2010), 96.

⁸⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁸⁴ Osman, 102.

legislative chamber, so as not to contribute in the vote for or against the amended Article I.⁸⁸⁵ It was a blow to the MB as a major Islamist movement to see their historical victory squandered. The MB originally saw their ability to influence the declaration of Islam as the religion of the state - during Sadat's reign - as a small victory, and a step closer to the realisation of an Islamic state. In effect, this change by the Mubarak regime allowed women and the Coptic community to run for any position, including the presidency. Additionally, the Mubarak government approved the reservation of two seats in the People's Assembly for women in every constituency (32 in total) in 2009. This law was implemented for the first and last time during the 2010 elections.⁸⁸⁶ A total of 64 seats (thirteen percent) in the newly expanded 504-member parliament were allocated to women.⁸⁸⁷ Expectedly, this law received a negative response by the public and the MB; similar to the last time a favourable law for women was passed during Sadat's rule. Even though the quota system may have given preferential treatment to women over men, where a seat was awarded based on gender not competency, it was perceived as a step backward for rights' activists. Childs explains that quota laws do not factor in mitigating circumstances and variables such as:

“The external political environment; extant institutional norms; the impact of party – affiliation, ideology and cohesion; differences among women representatives; representatives' newness; institutional position, including front and back bench, and government or opposition membership; committee appointment and

⁸⁸⁵ Osman, 102.

⁸⁸⁶ The law was intended to remain in effect for two five-year parliamentary sessions, but it was declared unconstitutional, for the second time in Egypt's political history, after the Jan 25 revolution.

⁸⁸⁷ Swelam.

leadership; women's caucus presence; and the wider vagaries of policy making."⁸⁸⁸

However, in the case of Egypt, that law guaranteed the representation of half of the country's population; who are referred to as a minority based on the rights allocated to them within Egypt's societal structure. The law was to ensure that a level of equality for women was to be recognized to further promote their role in society, as specified by the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; signed by Egypt.⁸⁸⁹ The former secretary general of the NCW Farkhonda Hassan stated this this law was "a temporary solution to give women the opportunity to prove themselves as powerful representatives in the political arena, paving the way for people to start nominating women on their own free will."⁸⁹⁰ However, the stipulations of the law were not the problem. It was the application of law that proved to be detrimental to women's representation in Parliament, according to Dr. Walid Kazziha. Kazziha explains that the electoral system did not "allow a large number of women to be elected from opposition groups,"⁸⁹¹ which affected the political balance by favouring a greater representation of female candidates within the NDP, due to ruling party's efficient structure and political influence. State feminism has been a relevant phenomenon in Egypt during the Mubarak regime, where multiple actors within the NDP and outside of it - who may not even be

⁸⁸⁸ Celis and Childs, 214-215.

⁸⁸⁹ "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women" *UN Division for the Advancement of Women*, accessed September 20, 2012.

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>

⁸⁹⁰ Heba Fahmy, "Women's Quota Sparks Fierce Competition ahead of PA Elections," *Daily News Egypt*, November 7, 2010, accessed November 11, 2011,

<http://dailynewsegypt.com/2010/11/07/womens-quota-sparks-fierce-competition-ahead-of-pa-elections/>

⁸⁹¹ *Ibid.*

women - were invested in the idea of the substantive representation of women; thereby supporting the implementation of such activities more frequently in Parliament, and in other institutions and alliances between the ruling party and institutions such as the NCW. In one governorate, for example, 131 women belonging to the NDP competed for two seats. Another governorate - Qena - which did not have a female representative since the 1970s, witnessed the nomination of nine female NDP candidates and sixteen female opposition party candidates.⁸⁹² The same phenomenon was seen in other governorates as well; where the overwhelming majority of female candidates belonged to the ruling NDP.

Participating in elections is the first step towards achieving these liberating qualities. When the quota system was introduced in the 2012 elections, over a hundred women registered themselves as candidates to run in a male-dominated race. Fathi, Head of the Association for Egyptian Female Lawyers (AEFL) explains that

“Women's involvement in the political sphere had long been an Egyptian taboo that human rights activists complained marginalized females and women issues such as education and sexual harassment... For years, male members of Parliament have objected to the presence of female MPs and women were not allowed any space in Parliament.”⁸⁹³

The quota system remains a contentious issue amongst Islamists, Islamic feminists, secular feminists and liberals; as some factions disagree over its necessity in encouraging women to participate in a traditional society. Moreover,

⁸⁹² Fahmy.

⁸⁹³ “EGYPT: Women Breaking Culture Barriers in Upcoming Parliamentary Elections,” *Ikhwanweb*, November 12, 2010, accessed November 20, 2012, <http://ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=27133>

analysts do not think the quota system is enough to affect a change in Egypt's conservative society. Nor do they believe the quota will necessarily change Egyptian society. Shadi Hamid, director of the Brookings Institution Doha Center asserts that

"[Quotas] don't address the real structural problem, they don't get to the root of the problem -- that the culture in the Middle East now is not supportive of active women's participation, is not supportive of women's leadership in senior positions."⁸⁹⁴

Furthermore, he concludes that due to an unchanging traditional society that when "there are free and fair elections, people in the Arab world don't vote for women."⁸⁹⁵ Also, Michele Dunne of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace explains that

"It may work in terms of getting women mobilized to run, [but] what that does in terms of the actual action of the assembly and whether it does something more profound to the society in terms of democratic values and the value of political participation and spreading those things in society, I'm not really sure. It's too early to tell."⁸⁹⁶

However, the Alliance for Arab Women (AAW) reveals that with or without the quota system, women running in a male-dominated field such as parliamentary elections comes with grave consequences, where a woman's reputation and social standing is at stake.⁸⁹⁷ An AAW explains that female candidates are "very easily slandered in the press. There are many accusations made against them about them having affairs, extramarital relations, that are not necessary true. Male candidates also face having bad issues brought forward

⁸⁹⁴ "EGYPT: Women Breaking Culture Barriers."

⁸⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁹⁶ Ibid.

against them in the press, but it's usually not of a sexual nature."⁸⁹⁸ Manal Aboul-Hassan of the FJP, have long since viewed the quota system as a tool for the Mubarak regime to garner more seats in the parliament through its NDP. As a result, when Aboul-Hassan ran in the 2102 elections, she ran for a non-quota seat against a male candidate from the NDP in protest against the quota system which she believed did nothing to encourage or empower women in the parliamentary race.⁸⁹⁹

Such arguments of 'equity' have recently surfaced amongst the camps of secular feminists and Islamic feminists regarding the question of applying a law in the new constitution that would ensure the presence of women in Parliament via the women's quota system of reserving seats in both the SC and PA. It is true that such a law would negate the idea of outlawing discrimination, but secularists have argued that in a traditional society like the one in Egypt, the quota would be the only foolproof way to guarantee a substantial female presence in vital governmental entities. Indeed, the 2010 elections saw the highest number of female candidates in Egyptian history to contest seats in Parliament. According to AEFL's Fathi, in the past, it was unheard of that large numbers of women were wanting to run in parliamentary elections, as she described such female political activism as being 'out of the question' for a traditionalist society.⁹⁰⁰ However, when women like Fathi witnessed a banned organization such as the MB win 88 seats in the 2005 elections, they argued "if a banned group managed to do so

⁸⁹⁸ Sarah A. Topol, "Egypt Vote Saves Some Seats for Women," *Aolnews.com*, November 7, 2010, accessed November 20, 2012, <http://www.aolnews.com/2010/11/07/egypt-vote-saves-some-seats-for-women/>

⁸⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰⁰ "EGYPT: Women Breaking Culture Barriers."

then we can do it.”⁹⁰¹ Islamic women activists, however, believe that women can empower themselves primarily through the harnessing of certain skills, such as becoming Islamic preachers, scholars, and politicians. By assuming these positions of authority, women can then encourage Muslim women to engage the public and challenge positions of authority that may endanger their rights and freedoms.⁹⁰² In addition, both Islamic feminists and Muslim Sisters describe their activism - whether political, social or religious - as their duty towards the realization of an Islamic state. Women are able to contribute to society and its institutions in matters of Islamic jurisprudence and out of necessity to battle the authoritarian entity that is in place instead of the enlightened Islamic rule.⁹⁰³

The MB was the one political entity - besides the old NDP - that was more than prepared to form a full-functioning party to participate in Egypt’s 2011/2012 elections. The MB had a long and successful history participating under Mubarak’s regime armed with their tactic of “participation, not domination” so as not to invoke the regime’s wrath and military assault on the organization. Moreover, the MB had already prepared a rough draft of their party platform in 2007 that was received with mixed reviews.⁹⁰⁴ In spite of the MB’s insistence on the need to empower women so they might acquire their rights in the public sphere, the MB stresses the importance that this mission will be realized so long as it did not conflict with society’s familial values. Also, the 2007 document

⁹⁰¹ “EGYPT: Women Breaking Culture Barriers.”

⁹⁰² Pruzan-Jørgensen, 4.

⁹⁰³ Mahbouba Ben Nasr, Review of al-Mar’a wal ‘amal ‘al-Siyasi: al Ru’iya al-Islamiyya [Women and Political Action: Islamic Vision] by Heba Raouf Ezzat, *Islamiyya Al-Ma ‘rifa, Readings and Reviews*, accessed January 10, 2013,

http://www.eiiit.org/resources/eiiit/eiiit/eiiit_article_read.asp?articleID=776

⁹⁰⁴ Refer to Chapter Three. The platform explained that the MB’s vision was based on “complete equality” between men and women, while preserving their different social roles.

referenced Egypt's "dominating negative social view regarding women," where its traditional segments need to grasp the idea that women's rights extend further beyond her primary right to an education.⁹⁰⁵

From the day of the MB's inception as a political organization, it was built and grew into the giant that is today by being a banned entity - by working underground and hiding from the limelight. As a result, it has always been a resisting force to an oppressive entity, and that is how its organization functions: as an opposing force. Now, and for the first time in the history of the MB, it is recognised as a legitimate organization and will have equal opportunity like the rest of the parties that have been struggling under the weight of the corrupt NDP for the past few decades. It could be argued that the MB's impressive parliamentary win is due to the many followers and their feelings of sympathy that they have gained over the years, and sharing common ground with the oppressed masses against the corrupt regime. Now that the organization is fully 'legalized' and there is no overbearing entity to hate and unite against, it is unclear whether the Egyptian people will re-align their priorities and political affiliations after the MB's performance in the PA, SC and CA. The MB and FJP need to become two separate entities, instead of two structures working to uplift the other through political and economic means. However, such a task seems quite difficult, as the majority of the FJP members are from the MB, and the MB follows a strict hierarchical and educational framework. As one Sister explains: "being part of the *Ikhwan* is an all-encompassing project - it is who you are, how

⁹⁰⁵ Omayma Abdel-Latif, "Women In Politics: Sisters in the Muslim Brotherhood," *AlMuslimah*, May 2, 2009, accessed November 23, 2010, <http://www.altmuslimah.com/a/b/spa/3051/>

you are brought up and how you identify with others.”⁹⁰⁶ Furthermore, for the FJP to be taken seriously and not be accused of bribing and intimidating voters and constituents, the MB charity functions should not be mixed with that of the FJP’s political campaigning efforts and its Nahda project.

To most Islamist women, the fight is not one for equal rights, but for complimentary roles for men and women; to work together to further improve the state of the Egyptian society.⁹⁰⁷ These women are fighting for rights within an Islamist framework without defying any of the norms set forth by Islamic jurisprudence. Their vision for a better society does not necessarily include advocating a better representation for women in Egypt’s public life, but it includes working towards attaining a more Islamic country through affirming a woman’s strengths. This is most telling in the words and vows of the MB’s female MP Azza el-Garf for 2012. During her short assignment to Egypt’s new PA, she publicly stated her intentions to dissolve most of the pro-women laws passed during the Mubarak era (under the direction and encouragement of the former First Lady Suzanne Mubarak), claiming that they are un-Islamic and conflicting with the goal of establishing a more *sharia*-based society. Existing laws regarding issues such as banning female genital mutilation (FGM) and women’s divorce rights were criticized by el-Garf, as tools that further incited the fragmentation of Egyptian society.⁹⁰⁸ Moreover, the society as a whole seems to be still largely influenced

⁹⁰⁶ Khalaf.

⁹⁰⁷ Heba Raouf Ezzat, “Rethinking Secularism ... Rethinking Feminism” *islamonline.net*, July 1, 2002, accessed December 13, 2011, http://www.arabphilosophers.com/Arabic/adiscourse/aeast-west/asecularism/Rethinking_Secularism_Rethinking_Feminism.htm

⁹⁰⁸ Sarah A. Topol, “Feminism, Brotherhood Style,” *Foreign Policy*, April 23, 2012, accessed April 26, 2012, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/04/23/Feminism_Brotherhood_Style?page=0,0

by archaic patriarchal norms – which is evident in an informal poll conducted before the PA elections by one blogger. Dalia Ziada reported that not one of the 1,400 voters she interviewed would consider voting for a woman nominee in the upcoming presidential elections.⁹⁰⁹

The PA held its first session at the end of January 2012, when the FJP was a visible force to be reckoned with. The FJP also selected its General Secretary, Mr. Saad el-Katatni, to assume the position of Parliament speaker, who is tasked with the responsibility of guiding the flow of the session and the topics to be discussed. As el-Katatni oversaw the activities of the MPs during the PA sessions, he pressured the FJP MPs to focus on getting everyone in the PA to work as a cohesive bloc, and dissuaded them from focusing on their own concerns and grievances to limit conflict and arguments. The FJP's female MPs, who represented less than two percent of the PA, were unable to speak up as much as they would have due to el-Katatni's requests. Three Muslim Sisters spoke at least once and were able to voice the grievances of their constituencies over the course of fifteen days and six sessions; a non-FJP female MP, Margaret Azer, included.⁹¹⁰ MP Hamed - a FJP member - argued that if it were not for el-Katatni's strict instructions directed at FJP members, the Sisters would have spoken up on more occasions.⁹¹¹

⁹⁰⁹ Laura Bohn, "Women and the Arab Uprisings: 8 'Agents of Change' to Follow," *CNN.com*, February 3, 2012, accessed February 11, 2012, <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/02/03/world/africa/women-arab-uprisings/index.html>

⁹¹⁰ R.H., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, February 9, 2012.

⁹¹¹ According to R.H., el-Katatni wanted to keep the focus on more pressing issues such as government spending and subsidies, economic issues etc. *Ibid.*

The FJP Female Cadres and the FJP's National Nahda Project

From the inception of the FJP, the Nahda (Renaissance) Project has been active within the party's offices and headquarters, and the FJP mobilized and devised strategies to present and unfold the project that aims to revitalise and rebuild Egyptian society. Seeing that the President Morsy's party platform included the Nahda project, the FJP remains tied to the MB; which is tied to the President regardless of his resignation from his previous position as Chairman of the FJP.⁹¹²

Morsy has been marketing the ambitious plans of the Nahda project to jumpstart the rehabilitation process of a country that was impeded by the revolution and election season. The first steps to actualizing the Nahda project involved training the female cadres of the FJP, and inevitably, the female population of the MB.⁹¹³ The leading figures of the Nahda initiative, such as el-Erian, believe that training the women is especially important; as they will be the front of the party, presenting to society the "Islamic alternative to the secular vision imposed on Egypt for decades."⁹¹⁴ The FJP launched their training activities in cooperation with the MB and the Egyptian Center for Monitoring Women's Priorities (MARAM) and under the supervision of el-Erian, the head of the Muslim Sisters Division - Mr. Ahmed Shaarawi, and the Maram Center official Gaber Muhanna.⁹¹⁵ The Maram center plans to conduct lectures and sessions once a week for three months to train 110 FJP women from all governorates in

⁹¹² Eman Ragab, "The Brotherhood's 'Deep State'," *Al-Ahram Weekly*, no. 1110, August 9 -15, 2012, accessed October 1, 2012, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2012/1110/op6.htm>

⁹¹³ "Freedom and Justice Party Launches Women's Cadres Project."

⁹¹⁴ Ibid. and A.M.A Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 31, 2012.

⁹¹⁵ "Freedom and Justice Party Launches Women's Cadres Project."

Egypt.⁹¹⁶ FJP officials deem this step necessary for the development of the FJP's women's skills and to further promote the party as "a major force that dominates the political scene in the coming phase of Egypt's history."⁹¹⁷ Prioritizing the expansion and development of the FJP is key in this training initiative. The initiative will focus on "popular presentation of the FJP's vision of the Islamic project, the role of women in that project as a cultural initiative for the nation as a whole, and the political, media and development issues, as well as the most important family issues on the scene."⁹¹⁸

Muhanna explained that this project was originally Morsy's task prior to his decision to run in the presidential elections. The Nahda project was intended to support female entrepreneurship with the provision of health insurance and necessary services to female heads of households. It also aimed to develop policies that will be more family-friendly, to further enable women to support their families.⁹¹⁹ Dr. Sabah Saqqari, head of the FJP's Women's Affairs Committee in central and southern Cairo, explained that the FJP women would be assigned to numerous kiosks located in the centre of Cairo, to affectively advertise and inform the public on the Nahda project. Another plan, the FJP sought to implement, was the creation of a women leadership initiative to teach and inspire

⁹¹⁶ "Freedom and Justice Party Launches Women's Cadres Project."

⁹¹⁷ Ibid.

⁹¹⁸ Ibid.

⁹¹⁹ Sondos Asem, "Ikhwanweb's Response to Mona ElTahawy's 'Why Do They Hate Us' Article," *IkhwanWeb*, April 26, 2012, accessed June 13, 2012, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=29926&ref=search.php>

the younger generation of girls in Egyptian society, according to Aboul-Hassan, head of the FJP Women's Affairs Committee in Cairo.⁹²⁰

As the date for the 2011/2012 elections arrived, Egypt was yet to write a new constitution. The FJP, due to the years of training and experience of the MB, became the dominant force in the race, whereas other players such as the April 6th movement, that dominated the streets and the Square during the 18 days of protests revolution, spent the ten months leading up to the first round of elections focusing on “the politics of protest rather than of party organization.”⁹²¹ With the FJP winning 43.4% of the PA seats,⁹²² they had the biggest representation of the Islamist wave in the government, and they are known to have a large female contingency within the 84-year old organization.⁹²³ Author and political commentator, Alaa el-Aswany, believes that the MB’s feeble female representation in politics is nothing more than a pro-democratic façade since their accommodationist style throughout history reveals their tactic for of using whatever tools necessary in their pursuit of power.⁹²⁴ FJP female candidates running as independents did not win, strengthening the hypothesis that a female candidate’s affiliation with a traditional Islamist party and movement improves her chances of winning.

The MB and the FJP have yet to establish a large reservoir, of competent, highly educated and experienced candidates, to match the magnitude of its

⁹²⁰ Peter Goodspeed, “Egyptian Divisions Still Festering a Year After Revolt Outbreak” *The National Post*, January 25, 2012, accessed May 21, 2012, <http://fullcomment.nationalpost.com/2012/01/25/peter-goodspeed-egyptian-divisions-still-festering-a-year-after-revolt-outbreak/>

⁹²¹ Brown, “When Victory Becomes An Option,” 5.

⁹²² Ibid.

⁹²³ Abdel-Latif, “Women In Politics: Sisters in the Muslim Brotherhood.”

⁹²⁴ Shabi, 6.

movement within Egyptian society.⁹²⁵ In the same manner it was believed that there is a limited number of female MB members qualified to run in elections, the male cadres of the movement and its political party also suffered the lack of qualified members. Several MB candidates that were running in the 2011/12 elections had only a religious background, when, in fact, the districts in which they ran required a grasp of economic and financial knowledge.⁹²⁶ As mentioned before, the PA and SC candidates were chosen through the utilization of the MB's hierarchy structure, i.e. candidates applied through their *ūsra*, where the accepted applications "passed through four additional layers of MB leadership [and] where they were thoroughly vetted before being seen by the FJP's executive offices."⁹²⁷ As Trager explains, this practice disproves the notion that the FJP and the MB are separate entities: "the former feeds off the latter's organizational structure in most everything it does."⁹²⁸

The Muslim Sisters and the Press

The Muslim Sisters who joined the FJP and won in Egypt's' parliamentary elections wasted no time in becoming highly vocal, as their names appeared in several media outlets on a regular basis during 2011 and 2012. After avoiding media outlets, the Muslim Sisters now flooded the newspapers and television channels. However, many view them as the mouthpiece of a looming and dark force that is desperately trying to portray itself as a liberal entity that aims to

⁹²⁵ A.S., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 24, 2012.

⁹²⁶ Ibid.

⁹²⁷ Tadros, Trager and Schenker. Also refer to Appendix A.

⁹²⁸ Ibid.

rebuild Egypt in unison with non-Islamist forces.⁹²⁹ Moreover, the Muslim Sisters are viewed by the public as a supporting entity to the MB's plan to undermine and override previously acquired women's rights by trying to rewrite these rights.⁹³⁰ In effect, the Muslim Sisters have spoken out in response to some of these worries, where they have insisted that the FJP never intends to alter women's rights laws, such as the acceptable age of marriage.⁹³¹ However, both the Muslim Sisters and the male MB members have released several statements that have 'muddied' their viewpoint and stance regarding women's issues, thus exposing themselves to accusations from non-Islamist parties and political analysts.

In addition to the rise of the perceived threat of Islamists to women's rights; a Constituent Assembly of 100 members was derived from the parliament for the purpose of rewriting Egypt's constitution. This was proven as problematic, due to the overwhelming presence of Islamists in Egypt's 2011/2012 Parliament.⁹³² Neither women nor Copts were adequately represented.⁹³³ Still, newly elected female MP Azza el-Garf of the FJP believed that even though the low female

⁹²⁹ A.R.A. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 30, 2012 and A.T. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, March 26, 2012.

⁹³⁰ Topol, "Feminism, Brotherhood Style," and Khalaf.

⁹³¹ Khalaf.

⁹³² It is still undecided whether or not the elected parliament of 2011/2012 will be dissolved. There have been changes made to the elected SC of 2012 prior to the formation of the second Constituent Assembly, and the PA elections, that were to be held in 2013, have been cancelled for the time being.

⁹³³ According to the Carnegie Endowment statistics and information of the PA, there were only 13 Christians parliamentarians and 12 female parliamentarians out of 508 seats. The Constituent Assembly that was made up of MPs resulted in no Coptic Christian members and a number of FJP female members. Refer to "Results of Egypt's People's Assembly Elections: Guide to Egypt's Transition," and David D. Kirkpatrick, "Egyptian Islamists Approve Draft Constitution Despite Objections," *The New York Times*, November 29, 2012, accessed January 9, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/30/world/middleeast/panel-drafting-egypts-constitution-prepares-quick-vote.html?pagewanted=1&_r=0&hp

representation of women in Parliament may be viewed as an illustration of the Egyptian public's views of women's political competence; having even one female MP may "prove to be more efficient than a number of appointed ones who have no knowledge regarding women's affairs and their problems."⁹³⁴ Dr. Manal Aboul-Hassan, the FJP candidate in Cairo, explained that the overwhelming participation of women in regards to exercising their right to vote is an obvious sign that the "only obstacle, to women playing a distinctive role during the previous 60 years, was the previous regime."⁹³⁵

Omaima Kamel's Memorable Interviews and Quotes

During and soon after the end of the parliamentary elections, the FJP's MP Dr. Omaima Kamel applauded the participation and positive activism of women in engaging the new Egypt. She added that this type of social engagement should continue "to expand the females' role in Egypt and existing problems should be tackled including education and health issues to help women improve further their status."⁹³⁶ However, Kamel also voiced her disapproval of the female representation in the outcome of PA and SC elections. Kamel expressed the party's dissatisfaction as she pointed to the fact that women were

⁹³⁴ There is no sufficient proof or research efforts to ascertain whether the past and current appointed parliamentarians are well-equipped to assume the responsibilities of passing and amending laws as el-Garf might believe. "FJP Female MPs Optimistic Despite Low Representation of Women in Parliament," *IkhwanWeb*, January 3, 2012, accessed October 3, 2012, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=29505>

⁹³⁵ "FJP Candidate Manal Aboul-hassan: Massive Women Turnout at Elections is Inspiring," *IkhwanWeb*, November 28, 2011, accessed December 2, 2011, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=29263&ref=search.php>

⁹³⁶ "FJP Female MPs Optimistic Despite Low Representation of Women in Parliament."

placed at the end of the various parties' lists, merely to fulfil a legal obligation.⁹³⁷

The FJP practiced that same tactic of placing women lower on their lists, but due to their overwhelming win and popularity, the women of the FJP were able to win seats only on the party lists and not on the individual lists. As a doctor, Kamel focused on her area of expertise; she asserted that 70 percent of health care providers are women and she called for solutions to the problems facing women in the workforce that may impede Egypt's future development and encroach on women's rights in the workplace.⁹³⁸

Following the inauguration of the PA sessions, the female FJP members started to respond to media reports that stated that the underwhelming representation of women in the PA reflected a governing structure hostile to women's rights. Redha Abdullah, an FJP MP in the PA, rejected these reports, which portrayed MP women as "a silent bloc with no real role in Parliament."⁹³⁹ Furthermore, she explained that women's input in the PA should not be measured by how many times they appear on the government-owned television channel that provides a live broadcast of the assembly sessions, as there are several MPs deputies who never spoke during the televised sessions, but have had a major role within the PA.

Soon after the elections of 2011/12, el-Garf spoke out against allegations put forth by several journalists that the new parliament was marginalizing the role

⁹³⁷ Experts Weigh in on Low Female Representation in Parliament," *Daily News Egypt*, January 27, 2012, accessed October 17, 2012, <http://dailynewsegypt.com/2012/01/27/experts-weigh-in-on-low-female-representation-in-parliament/>

⁹³⁸ "FJP Female MPs Optimistic Despite Low Representation of Women in Parliament."

⁹³⁹ "FJP Female MPs: We Cooperate with Everyone in Parliament; Women Play Major Role," *IkhwanWeb*, March 12, 2012, accessed April 26, 2012, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=29771&ref=search.php>

of women in Parliament and in society.⁹⁴⁰ Moreover, el-Erian asserted that women are not just meant to support men, as they have their own distinct role in society, arguing that “it is illogical [for the MB and FJP] to disable half of society’s resources and capabilities by limiting their role to support and assistance only.”⁹⁴¹ Another Muslim Sister in the PA, Ms. Hoda Ghania, argued that the female MPs’ roles in Parliament “should not be limited to women's issues only; adding that they must debate all issues of concern to the Egyptian citizen.”⁹⁴²

Azza el-Garf’s Media Attention

The one FJP member, Muslim Sister and MP, who occupied several distinct headlines in local, national, and international newspapers, was el-Garf. Despite her political experience, she was not reserved in regards to voicing her conservative opinions. Her objections to banning practices such as FGM provoked Egyptians and encouraged them to deduce that outspoken Muslim Sisters agreed with the MB’s stance against laws they deemed harmful to women. Expectedly, el-Garf backtracked on those comments by stating: “None of these views that were in the media expressed my opinions...it was a campaign waged against me after I expressed my opinion in applying the rules of *sharia* in the family [unit].”⁹⁴³ She placed herself in a predicament in two main ways. Firstly, she opposed laws that were placed to protect women from violent

⁹⁴⁰Hussein Mahmoud, “Aza Al-Garf, Strong Voice in New Parliament Advocating Women Rights,” *IkhwanWeb*, January 13, 2012, accessed October 1, 2012, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=29544>

⁹⁴¹“Freedom and Justice Party Launches Women's Cadres Project,” *IkhwanWeb*, October 1, 2012, accessed October 3, 2012, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=30306>

⁹⁴²“FJP Female MPs: We Cooperate With Everyone in Parliament; Women Play Major Role.”

⁹⁴³ Topol, “Feminism, Brotherhood Style.”

practices or abusive households such as FGM and *khul'* (the right for a woman to divorce her husband according to *sharia*), arguing that the former should be the women's choice, and the latter promotes a higher divorce rate by giving women the right to divorce their husbands.⁹⁴⁴ She ignored the fact that the practice of FGM occurs only on young girls against their will. Secondly, she expected women to engage in the country's political life even as she supported the society's traditional and patriarchal practices.

El-Garf was not the only prominent female member of the FJP to not fully reject FGM, as Dr. Saqqari explained her views in an interview that "only a doctor can decide whether or not a girl is in need of the surgery."⁹⁴⁵ This is problematic as reporter Shahira Amin explains that doctors, who perform the surgery for a hundred Egyptian pounds (\$20-25) in impoverished towns in Upper Egypt, may have a financial incentive in operating; and doctors may want to perform more FGM procedures per day in light of Egypt's deteriorating economy.⁹⁴⁶ This is a point that Saqqari and el-Garf did not address. Following an interview with el-Garf, Topol summed up her persona as being a "strong female in the context of a movement whose ideology is wholly patriarchal."⁹⁴⁷ Lastly, when el-Garf was questioned about her role as a woman in the PA, she responded by stating:

"I should not be defined or set to a different standard based on my gender. I also have to deal with several challenges facing Egypt

⁹⁴⁴ Jessica Gray, "Islamist Parliamentarian Objects to Egypt's Ban on FGM," *WeNews Correspondent*, March 28, 2012, accessed, April 26, 2012, <http://womensenews.org/story/genital-mutilation/120327/islamist-parliamentarian-objects-egypts-ban-fgm#.UI26BWI26cw>

⁹⁴⁵ Shahira Amin, "The Battle Against Female Genital Mutilation," *Daily News Egypt*, November 15, 2012, accessed November 22, 2012, <http://dailynewsegypt.com/2012/11/15/the-battle-against-female-genital-mutilation/>

⁹⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁴⁷ Topol, "Feminism, Brotherhood Style."

and my district. Those may include - but not entirely focus - on women's issues."⁹⁴⁸

El-Garf's comments indicate that an Islamist framework – irrespective of the origin of its ideology (ex. Salafist, Wahhabi), supersedes any feminist or gender equality agenda. Like el-Ghazali, el-Garf would stand against personal status laws that provided Egyptian women with more rights. At the same time, she would fight for a less 'religion-dependent' representation of women in Egyptian political life; as she called for women

“to be more insistent on taking part in the political life -- to make sure their votes are cast and that their demands are not ignored. A woman should be developed in all aspects: health, economy, and education.”⁹⁴⁹

Expectedly, el-Garf's vision for women's empowerment must only become a reality after the woman has fulfilled her motherly duties. El-Garf asserts: “Our families are the future of our country.”⁹⁵⁰ The seemingly contradictory comments should not come as a surprise, as el-Garf, who joined the MB at the age of fifteen after meeting with el-Ghazali, is considered one of the icon's many loyal students.⁹⁵¹ El-Garf's husband, MB member - Badr Mohamed Badr, echoes the same convictions regarding women's representation in Parliament before the revolution. He states that: “the image of women in the past election was usually decorative, provided by the regime, but this time we actually went to villages and heard women from all classes.”⁹⁵² El-Garf focused on the provision of social services in her district. Additionally, with the revolution and the FJP's

⁹⁴⁸ A.G. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, July 12, 2012.

⁹⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁹⁵¹ Ibid.

⁹⁵² Ibid.

developmental programs, el-Garf has called for the restructuring of the education system as the curriculum has suffered “extensive deliberate damage and distortion.”⁹⁵³

The Constituent Assembly

As aforementioned, the outcomes of the PA and the SC affect the makeup of the future constitution for the new Egypt. The Constituent Assembly (CA) members are responsible for rewriting the constitution according to the constitutional declaration of March 30, 2011.⁹⁵⁴ Because the PA is overwhelmingly Islamist, concerns regarding women’s and Coptic rights were raised within the Egyptian society.⁹⁵⁵ Normally, a nation would first write its constitution then engage in the democratic process of elections according to the newly amended constitution.⁹⁵⁶ In effect, these actions have been described as “picking the fruits of the revolution before actually nurturing it to ensure a bountiful harvest.”⁹⁵⁷ However, the SCAF - the interim government - decided to forge ahead with the elections, which after the rewriting of the constitution may be deemed illegal, and might be dissolved.⁹⁵⁸ Fifty members of the 100-member Constituent Assembly were selected from the PA and SC. Many argued that the

⁹⁵³ “FJP Female MPs: We Cooperate with Everyone in Parliament; Women Play Major Role.”

⁹⁵⁴ L. Lavi, “An Examination Of Egypt’s Draft Constitution Part I: Religion and State – The Most Islamic Constitution in Egypt’s History,” *The Middle East Media Research Institute*, December 3, 2012, accessed March 24, 2013, <http://www.memri.org/report/en/print6846.htm>

⁹⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁵⁶ Godspeed.

⁹⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁵⁸ Bradley Hope, “Analysis: Egypt is at its Most Fragile Since the Fall of Mubarak,” *The National*, Nov 23, 2011, accessed March 26, 2011, <http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/middle-east/analysis-egypt-is-at-its-most-fragile-since-the-fall-of-mubarak>

PA was not representative of Egypt, with over sixty percent Islamist MPs and only twelve women.⁹⁵⁹

The CA's main function was to draft a new constitution to be approved by the people in a referendum.⁹⁶⁰ The Assembly was given six months to complete its work after which the referendum will be held within 15 days.⁹⁶¹ In April 2012, the CA's list of names was compiled, where 36 of the fifty MPs belonged to the FJP or the Salafist el-Nour Party. Specifically, 25 FJP members and eleven el-Nour members made up the 36 Islamist CA members. The remaining fourteen seats were distributed amongst other parties and independents.⁹⁶² The other 50 members, hailing from different academic professional associations, were described as mostly personalities with Islamist leanings.⁹⁶³

There were only six Coptic Christians to represent ten percent of the population, and six women to represent around half of the population. It is significant to note that one of the Christians selected was Rafiq Habib, the deputy head of the FJP. Two of the Christians were women, thereby representing both women and Christians and increasing the number of seats that can be assigned to other parties or individuals. Susan Zaghloul, a member of the SC and an FJP member, as well as Fatma Abu Zeid, the daughter of a prominent Brotherhood

⁹⁵⁹ Refer to Appendix E and Abigail Hauslohner, "How the Military Won Egypt's Presidential Election," *Time.com*, June 18, 2012, accessed January 3, 2013, <http://world.time.com/2012/06/18/how-the-military-has-won-egypts-presidential-election/>

⁹⁶⁰ "Arab Uprisings: The Battle for Egypt's Constitution," *The Project on Middle East Political Science* 17 (January 11, 2013): 24, accessed March 27, 2013,

http://pomeps.org/wpcontent/uploads/2013/01/POMEPS_BriefBooklet17_Egypt_web.pdf

⁹⁶¹ "Elections in Egypt: Implications of Recent Court Decisions on the Electoral Framework," *Middle East and North Africa International Foundation for Electoral Systems* (August 2012): 2.

⁹⁶² Abdel-Rahman Hussein, "The Constituent Assembly Nominees Dissected,"

Egyptindependent.com, March 25, 2012, accessed September 30, 2012,

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/constituent-assembly-nominees-dissected>

⁹⁶³ Ibid.

Guidance Bureau member; represented the Muslim Sisters.⁹⁶⁴ Subsequently, the CA was dissolved when lawyers and activists filed lawsuits clarifying how the CA's list of names is dominated by Islamist ones, and therefore was unrepresentative of the Egyptian peoples.⁹⁶⁵ According to Mostafa el-Naggar, an MP and a member of el-Adl party, the non-Islamist MPs were unaware of the list of nominated names for the CA. El-Naggar explained: "the remainder of the MPs were blocked from knowing these names or their backgrounds and expertise, and only found out about the nominees for the first time when the ballots were being handed out to us."⁹⁶⁶ Moreover, he described his shock at the minuscule number of nominees that were to represent Egypt's female population and their concerns. When he questioned his colleague, who belonged to the Islamist majority, regarding this matter, he replied: "We cannot find women who are suitable to become members of the assembly."⁹⁶⁷ His comments are puzzling given the existence of several highly competent Egyptian women such as the secularist Dr. Nawal al-Saadawi and the Islamist Dr. Heba Raouf Ezzat, whose records were highlighted in previous chapters, who could have adequately presented women's concerns and issues. It is interesting to note that even Al-Azhar, which is considered the pinnacle of Sunni learning, had five seats

⁹⁶⁴ Hussein, "The Constituent Assembly Nominees Dissected."

⁹⁶⁵ Fayed.

⁹⁶⁶ Mostafa al-Naggar, "Why We Withdrew from the Constituent Assembly," *EgyptIndependent.com*, March 30, 2012, accessed September 21, 2012, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/opinion/why-we-withdrew-constituent-assembly>

⁹⁶⁷ Ibid.

reserved and yet, withdrew from the first CA “in solidarity with liberals, churches and others.”⁹⁶⁸

The Reshuffling of the CA Members and Representatives of the Egyptian Society

An amended list of CA members was introduced in June 2012, when PA speaker el-Katatni announced the names of its members. 575 Parliament members participated in voting, out of the 678 members, from both houses of Parliament.⁹⁶⁹ The list contained 33 members from eight political parties.⁹⁷⁰ Additionally, seven members would be women, and seven members would represent Egypt’s youth and those injured during the January 25 revolution. Ten Islamic scholars were chosen to represent al-Azhar and other Islamic bodies, with only eight people to represent Copts - four from the different churches and four from political movements and public figures.⁹⁷¹ Of the many FJP members present in the CA, FJP leaders el-Erian, and el-Beltagy were included in this endeavour, as well as several members from the MB’s Guidance Bureau.⁹⁷² The CA’s list included other personalities from outside of the PA and SC such as the Chairman of the Lawyers Syndicate, the Chairman of the Journalists Syndicate and the Head of the Supreme Judicial Council, to name a few.⁹⁷³ Once again, women and Copts were underrepresented which further worried the public that

⁹⁶⁸ “New Constituent Assembly Faces Deep Challenges,” *Reuters*, June 13, 2012, accessed September 20, 2012, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/new-constituent-assembly-faces-deep-challenges>

⁹⁶⁹ “Update: Parliament Elects New Constituent Assembly,” *Al-Masry al-Youm*, June 13, 2012, accessed September 21, 2012, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/update-parliament-elects-new-constituent-assembly>

⁹⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁹⁷¹ Ibid.

⁹⁷² Ibid.

⁹⁷³ Fayed.

their rights would be curtailed, as the new CA was still overwhelmingly Islamist.⁹⁷⁴

While the newer CA members were working to form a new constitution, many women's rights activists were worried that rights previously granted to them would be revoked, prompting NCW head, Mervat Tellawi, to state that "women's rights must be set down in the constitution so they are not merely a gift bestowed by a president or parliament, that is then taken back when they leave."⁹⁷⁵ She also pointed out that in a traditional society such as Egypt's, the reinstatement of a quota system would ensure women were properly represented in Parliament. Some activists have even demanded a fifty percent female presence in the CA.⁹⁷⁶ However, FJP female member and CA member Ghaniya rejected such calls arguing that such demands go against the principle of equal rights irrespective of gender, class, race or religion. The initial draft of the new constitution included clauses against discrimination and in favour of equality. Ghaniya pointed out that the articles on equality are sufficient to ensure women's rights. In regards to female political participation, she explained that the "societal culture and women's endeavours are the main factors that should impact women's presence on the political scene."⁹⁷⁷ Ghaniya, thus, encourages women to be active in areas concerning public, charitable and social work.⁹⁷⁸ Due to the reaction to the early version of the laws being drafted, the process of writing the

⁹⁷⁴ "New Constituent Assembly Faces Deep Challenges."

⁹⁷⁵ Fayed.

⁹⁷⁶ "Huda Ghaniya: New Constitution Will Make Women Worthy First-Class Citizens," *IkhwanWeb*, August 1, 2012, accessed August 16, 2012, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=30218>

⁹⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁷⁸ Ibid.

constitution has also been criticized for taking place with a “lack of transparency and lack of representation of various groups.”⁹⁷⁹ The general public, meanwhile, seemed eager to move towards a level of normalcy after having tired of the ups and downs of the constitution drafting process.

The Controversial Components of the New Constitution: The Islamization of State Policy

In the initial stages of outlining the first constitutional draft, Egyptian society erupted as Islamist approaches within the CA demanded that certain women’s rights given in the Mubarak era are reverted to their original version.⁹⁸⁰ Salafist CA members called for the lowering of the age of marriage, the legalising of FGM, the lowering of the age of parental custody of children and revoking the right for women to divorce. Soon after, a demonstration took place outside the SC building, where the CA meets to work on the new constitution.⁹⁸¹ Secular women and women’s rights activists protested on the streets of Egypt and tried to garner support, which proved difficult as the majority of the population was still unaware of or uninterested in gender-related concerns such as the implementation of Article 68 (formerly known as Article 36); leaving women

⁹⁷⁹ “What the Women Say: Egypt’s Fitful Revolution: Women in the Balance,” *International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) Brief 4*, (October 2012) accessed October 3, 2012, <http://www.icanpeacework.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/egyptoct2012.pdf>

⁹⁸⁰ Gregg Carlstrom, “Political Clash over Egypt’s Constitution,” *Al-Jazeera English*, October 20, 2012, accessed March 27, 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2012/10/20121019620186523.html>

⁹⁸¹ “Protest Against “anti-women” Article in Draft Constitution,” *AswatMasriya.com*, October 3, 2012, October 15, 2012, <http://en.aswatmasriya.com/news/view.aspx?id=885ef775-3b25-4782-b140-530932374938>

rights' supporters responsible for the burden.⁹⁸² In addition, a press conference was held to protect Article 68 that may threaten women rights and would inevitably conflict with other articles of the constitution.⁹⁸³ Specifically, Article 68 proposed that the state "will reinforce gender equality in all spheres but in accordance with the interpretations of *Sharia*."⁹⁸⁴ As mentioned before, it is not the issue that *sharia* will be implemented that is causing this level of grief; it is the issue of which interpretation of *sharia* will be used and to what extent; at the time of implementing these laws. Understandably, human rights groups fear that some interpretations of Islamic texts may undermine women rights, hence their opposition to the proposed article.⁹⁸⁵

Women's rights activists and minority groups are left alone to fend off and fight such proposals that "circumscribe and 'qualify' rights based on gender and religion."⁹⁸⁶ Article 68 worried women rights activists who wondered if passing laws in accordance to some form of *sharia* interpretation would be used to re-allow the practice of FGM and lower the age of marriage for women. However, Dr. Kamel, one of the seven women in the CA, asserted that Article 68 is a gift to women's rights as it "ensures equality for women in every aspect of life."⁹⁸⁷ Furthermore, Kamel argued that the age of marriage is "not even mentioned, you cannot state an age in the constitution, this is a legislative issue not a

⁹⁸² "What the Women Say."

⁹⁸³ "Protest Against "anti-women" Article in Draft Constitution."

⁹⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁸⁶ "What the Women Say."

⁹⁸⁷ Safaa Abdoun, "Muslim Brotherhood Women Try to Assuage the Concerns of Women's Rights Activists," *Trustlaw.org*, November 9, 2012, accessed November 9, 2012, <http://www.trust.org/trustlaw/news/muslim-brotherhood-women-try-to-assuage-concerns-of-womens-rights-activists/>

constitutional one.”⁹⁸⁸ Kamel also pointed out that there exist more pressing issues than those on which the liberals and seculars have chosen to focus: “What about women’s education and the fight against illiteracy... which is still rampant in rural Egypt? What about the struggle against poverty in a country where nearly half the population is impoverished?”⁹⁸⁹ The CA eventually dropped the article for the unforeseeable future.⁹⁹⁰ However, this decision angered many of the more conservative CA members who desired the actualization of Islamic law.

As media attention continued to focus on the controversial articles in the new constitution, political analyst, Mariz Tadros, redirected the attention to the possibility that the constitution is the first step towards the Islamization of state policy; mainly through the major pitfalls in Articles 219 and 4.⁹⁹¹ The combination of both articles, in the same constitution, produces a dangerous weapon that could be used to severely curtail women’s rights. Article 2 referred to abiding by the principles of *sharia*, whilst Article 219 further clarifies that Islamic jurisprudence is the basis of legislation. Article 219 is located in the section entitled “state and security affairs.” Tadros explained that the freedoms found in the constitution are:

“qualified by the proviso ‘so long as they do not violate the principles [of the section] regulating state and society’, which in practice refers to article 219. This wording means that no rights or

⁹⁸⁸ Abdoun, “Muslim Brotherhood Women Try to Assuage the Concerns of Women’s Rights Activists.”

⁹⁸⁹ Khalaf.

⁹⁹⁰ Abdoun, “Muslim Brotherhood Women Try to Assuage the Concerns of Women’s Rights Activists.”

⁹⁹¹ Mariz Tadros, “Egypt: the Islamization of State Policy,” *OpenDemocracy*, January 8, 2013, accessed July 23, 2013, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/mariz-tadros/egypt-islamization-of-state-policy>

freedoms are absolute, that all are contingent upon the interpretation of article 219.”⁹⁹²

In practice, this article will be the basis for Islamizing any sets of state policy. For example, the MB-led Ministry of Education removed a picture of Doria Shafik from secondary history books because she was not veiled, due to the objection of several Islamist television satellite stations to the image.⁹⁹³

The MB has time and again released statements assuring the Islamist currents that Islamic *sharia* law will be a central theme in Egypt’s new constitution.⁹⁹⁴ During the deliberations and negotiations that took place amongst the CA members, the MB tried to appease the liberal members by keeping the original wording of "principles of *sharia*," while explaining its boundaries by detailing that the idea of principles would include ‘the juristic rules’ of *sharia*; which has to be agreed upon by Islamic scholars through the use of ‘accepted sources’ of the *Quran*’s interpretation.⁹⁹⁵ On the other hand, Salafist influences demanded a stricter wording where they advocated the ‘the rulings of *sharia*’ instead, in an attempt to pressure Egypt’s courts to abide by a narrower interpretation and implementation of *sharia* law.⁹⁹⁶

The post-revolution time frame is unclear as to its direction and the type of government that will govern Egypt and will tackle women’s rights issues. The short-lived interim government represented by SCAF did not address any women’s rights issues; except to dissolve the women quota seats in Parliament,

⁹⁹² Mariz Tadros.

⁹⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁹⁴ Maggie Michael, “Egypt’s Brotherhood: Shariah Must Be Charter Base,” *Associated Press*, October 31, 2012, accessed October 31, 2012, <http://news.yahoo.com/egypts-brotherhood-shariah-must-charter-172207574.html>

⁹⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁹⁶ Ibid.

and replace it with the requirement of having one woman per party list. Unfortunately, this was not reflective of a good start in the right direction for women's rights, where SCAF should have further specified that women be placed in the top half of the lists, to guarantee a larger presence of women in Parliament. Moreover, the running of female candidates for the Salafist group al-Nour, with pictures of flowers instead of their faces, is not an encouraging start soon after the dissolution of the Mubarak regime.⁹⁹⁷ The disappointing presentation of women in Parliament has been partly attributed to the limited time given to new liberal and secularist parties to recruit and assemble their human resources, and to nominate the most experienced female political figures. Egypt's electoral system still lacks an effective measure to even out the political arena for female candidates. The fact remains that the MB never had more than one female candidate listed in any of their party lists; be it the individual or party lists. In other words, the MB placed enough of their female candidates on their lists to fulfill the requirements of election participation. The lack of political experience is more often than not the reason provided by MB members to explain low female political participation, especially within the MB and FJP. However, almost all other parties positioned female candidates on the bottom half of the lists; also reducing their chances of success. The reason for such a tactic is that in all likelihood, no party list would gain fifty percent of the votes in any single

⁹⁹⁷ Salafist parties prohibited the pictures of female candidates to be presented in all media outlets, including the banners set up to garner votes for the female candidates and the parties. In some instances, the female candidate's name was replaced by that of her husband's.

district.⁹⁹⁸ Furthermore, in Egypt's traditional society, it is still difficult for a female candidate to overcome the prejudices in most districts outside the large cities of Cairo and Alexandria.⁹⁹⁹ In the meantime, the small number of female MPs may shed light on this issue during the constitutional drafting process, in an effort to improve female political participation through the implementation of favorable laws. Enas Mostafa - a Muslim Sister - asserted that "Egyptian culture has never encouraged women to participate in society, in media or politics and such things. There is this negative view of women in politics but this is not the fault of religion, it is cultural."¹⁰⁰⁰ It is worth noting that Egypt is ranked the 125th out of 130 countries in regards to gender equality according to the 2010 World Economic Forum.¹⁰⁰¹

Another aspect of low female representation in political roles within the MB and the FJP, are the Muslim Sisters themselves. For example, Muslim Sister, Dina Hussein, argues that rather than engaging the Egyptian society through political means: "Islam is telling me I am free to choose... I want to prioritise my family because family is our main strength."¹⁰⁰² Furthermore, she believes that due to the fact that 90 percent of Egypt is Muslim, it makes sense for politics to be prescribed by *sharia*.¹⁰⁰³ In conclusion, in spite of the aforementioned strong-willed Muslim Sisters and FJP female personalities, the majority of the Sisters

⁹⁹⁸ Mahmoud Hamad, "The Constitutional Challenges in Post-Mubarak Egypt," *Insight Turkey* 14, no. 1 (2012), 65.

⁹⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Shsbi, 7.

¹⁰⁰¹ Farzaneh Roudi-Fahimi, Shereen El Feki, and Tyjen Tsai, "Youth Revolt in Egypt: A Country at the Turning Point," *Population Reference Bureau*, February 2011, accessed March 26, 2013, <http://www.prb.org/Articles/2011/youth-egypt-revolt.aspx>

¹⁰⁰² Shsbi, 7.

¹⁰⁰³ Ibid.

shy away from the limelight, lack the required skills, or may rather prefer to focus on their families, whether by choice or under the directives of the MB.

A year after the January 25 revolution - little has changed for the women who tested their equal standing with men when they brought down a corrupt government. As for the Muslim Sisters, they have become more vocal, more politically active and more confident to move forward towards the goal set forth by their political party and by the MB. Sondos Asem, a young Muslim Sister who edits the MB's online English website, reiterates the same sentiments as her Sisters: "Women do most of the work on the ground, especially in campaigns. They are larger in numbers, and in influence in campaigns, they can be more convincing."¹⁰⁰⁴ Asem also revealed the impressive groundwork in which she and many other young Sisters participated during the presidency elections; she explained that she recently challenged herself and her friends to reach one hundred voters each, to ensure Dr. Mohammed Morsy's win in the limited amount of time that was available.¹⁰⁰⁵ However, their interest in partaking in political action may be due to their desire to collectively ensure political reform through piety and religious discourse. To many Muslim Sisters, democracy and the application of democratic practices are just stepping-stones towards the building of an Islamic society. The revolution may have made the goal of democracy more reachable, but to the Muslim Sisters, household duties are still prioritized. Fatma el-Zomor, a Muslim Sister, recalled a time when the women of

¹⁰⁰⁴ Khalaf.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Ibid.

the MB were forced to operate underground and watch political events from the side-lines:

“Before the revolution the Muslim Brotherhood had a red line - and that red line was the Sisters. They would not put them in the limelight because they feared for them. They had pledged that they would not allow the security services to arrest women.”¹⁰⁰⁶

According to Dialika Krahe, a journalist who has interviewed several Muslim Sisters, the Sisters may want to be liberated, but only within the confines of Islam as they are “women fighting for rights, but they are not interested in fighting for them against men.”¹⁰⁰⁷ They are dedicating their time and talent to change the negative perceptions of the society in regards to the Islamist movement of the MB and its political unit - the FJP. By promoting female political participation through assigning very public roles to the Muslim Sisters, their plan to erase harmful stereotypes may work over the long term. However, the religious tide that has seemed to take over all political avenues in Egypt including the CA, is more determined than ever to revoke portions of Egypt’s Personal Status Law as the MB contends that the changes made to these laws over the past decade are against *sharia*.

In 2012, with the rewriting of the constitution and the rebuilding of alliances with foreign powers, the fear that an Islamist movement as large as the MB will repress several strands of society, such as women, Coptic Christians and even Muslims who advocate a non-Islamist rule; or follow a different interpretation of *sharia*; seems more of a reality than fiction. The MB no longer has to accommodate any overseeing oppressive power. Moreover, Browers

¹⁰⁰⁶ Khalaf.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Krahe.

explains that the fear will prove palpable when Islam is “legitimated as the source of political and social norms.”¹⁰⁰⁸ Several analysts and academics, such as Hamzawy (2010), Ottaway (2003), Karam (2010) and el-Ghobashy (2005), have stipulated in the past that Islamist movements, particularly the MB, will modify, amend or even reform their public image and their agenda to appease the majority or the political consensus. One telling example of that is the MB’s continual tactic of forming alliances with parties that may not seem to share the same views regarding issues such as women’s rights, the implementing of *sharia* as the principle source of law, or Coptic rights. Particularly, it was Karam’s explanation that rang true in regards to the MB and its negotiation tactics with Egypt’s old authoritarian regimes, where gender discrimination was a characteristic that stood out when Islamists and non-Islamists came to the negotiation table, and what Karam described as a reminder of the bad old days of colonialism.¹⁰⁰⁹ Karam further explained that when two right-wing entities need to find a temporary peaceful state of co-existence, moderate discourse is neglected, thereby disregarding women’s rights issues. In turn, a ‘third way’ of thinking never materializes, which gives way to a “vicious cycle, with the mute moderate discourse emerges a louder radical one, which in turn leads to further antagonisms and conflict.”¹⁰¹⁰

Still, the FJP women have yet to prove they are able and ready to take on the pressures of rebuilding an unstable Egypt in the face of their overpowering

¹⁰⁰⁸ Michaëlle L. Browsers, *Democracy and Civil Society in Arab Political Thought: Transcultural Possibilities*. (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 147.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Karam, “Democracy and Faith,” 71.

¹⁰¹⁰ *Ibid.*

helicopter parent - the MB - and stand up against cultural biases that view women as ill-equipped to deal with the many obstacles and pressures of a governmental and parliamentary position.

The FJP's War on the NCW

Besides the negative public response towards el-Garf's comments, the active female members of the FJP joined their voices with that of the FJP and MB in attacking the NCW and everything it stands for. Soon after the elections, the SCAF issued a decree to restructure and appoint new members to the NCW, which the FJP have defined as the friends, confidants and associates of Suzanne Mubarak.¹⁰¹¹ The FJP argued that the SCAF should not have proceeded with such changes without consulting with all political parties and stakeholders, arguing that the new NCW "would not serve the interests of the nation or fulfil the goals of the revolution as far as Egyptian women were concerned."¹⁰¹² Kamel described the NCW as a 'token' council that is unable to comprehend and grasp the real needs of Egyptian women and only serves as a "consultative council for the executive branch ... with no power to implement its own decisions."¹⁰¹³ In addition, she described the assignment and formation of the new NCW as being "shrouded in mystery and secrecy,"¹⁰¹⁴ adding that the problems that women

¹⁰¹¹ "Dr. Manal Abul Hassan: We Denounce Suzanne Mubarak's Council Meddling in Women's Rights," *IkhwanWeb*, March 6, 2012, accessed April 10, 2012, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=29752&ref=search.php>

¹⁰¹² "Omaima Kamil: Freedom and Justice Party Promotes Egyptian Women Welfare, Wants National Council to Fulfill Demands, Restore Usurped Rights," *IkhwanWeb*, February 17, 2012, accessed March 6, 2012,

<http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=29682&ref=search.php>

¹⁰¹³ Ibid.

¹⁰¹⁴ Ibid.

face are greater than what the thirty members of NCW are capable of dealing with.

In retaliation to the secular ideologies brought on by the NCW onto the Egyptian society, Aboul Hassan - Secretary of the FJP Women's Committee in Cairo - argued that "our (FJP) vision on the status of women is certainly superior to and more comprehensive than the limited Western view."¹⁰¹⁵ Her statement came in line with the FJP's warning to the NCW to refrain from involving further international agreements or treaties during their meetings with the UN, which in their opinion will inevitably lead to "more tension and strife in the Egyptian street, due to dubious policies on the basis of which [the] Council was founded."¹⁰¹⁶ According to a report on Islamist women's activism, there is a focus by Islamist women to try and localise any ideas or laws pertaining to women to better suit the region's needs and values.¹⁰¹⁷ In other words, laws imposed by CEDAW and the UN should be revised to become more Egyptian-friendly and inevitably more suitable to Islamic teaching. Expectedly, the report explained that most Islamist women activists impose the application of Western or 'universal' terminology such as gender, equality and feminism that may promote 'a particular Western worldview' which overlooks the much favored complementarity roles between men and women."¹⁰¹⁸ El-Beltaji stated that the Egyptian society "want integration and coordination of the roles of men and women, a shared responsibility, in

¹⁰¹⁵ "Egyptians Demand a National Council for the Family," *IkhwanWeb*, March 9, 2012, accessed April 16, 2012, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=29765&ref=search.php>

¹⁰¹⁶ "Freedom and Justice Party Renews Call for National Consensus Government; Rejects Borrowing Policy, Women's Council," *IkhwanWeb*, February 22, 2012, accessed August 14, 2012, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=29706&ref=search.php>

¹⁰¹⁷ Julie Elisabeth Pruzan-Jørgensen, "Islamic Women's Activism in the Arab World," *DIIS Policy Brief* (February 2012): 3.

¹⁰¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

accordance with a special Egyptian agenda, not an agenda imposed by the women's office in the United Nations.”¹⁰¹⁹ In effect, the FJP called for a unified entity that gathers the NCW and the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood into one council to represent the ‘family’, and that would reflect “the complementary roles of men and women.”¹⁰²⁰ El-Beltaji further expressed that the new council for the Egyptian family should have a minimum sixty percent female representation in its members.¹⁰²¹ Moreover, Kamel revealed the circumstances under which the FJP would cooperate and work with the NCW. The FJP will be in agreement with the organization as long as the new post-revolution NCW represents all Egyptian women, Kamel explained, through reconsidering all decisions taken by the previous NCW, such as the CEDAW and personal status laws, and opening them up for public discussion “to achieve the goals and wishes of Egyptian women, and restore all their usurped rights.”¹⁰²²

The last issue in which the female FJP members engaged the media was the question of whether to return to the women's quota system, and whether to include it in the constitution to ensure that women are better represented in Parliament. The aforementioned public personalities of the Muslim Sisters spoke out against it, with el-Garf asserting that that no longer will women be marginalized, where she called on the media to “end stereotyping women as victims with no roles.”¹⁰²³ As the FJP female members channelled their opinions and agenda for the reformation of the Egyptian society starting with the family

¹⁰¹⁹“Egyptians Demand a National Council for the Family.”

¹⁰²⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰²¹ Ibid.

¹⁰²² “Omaima Kamil: Freedom and Justice Party Promotes Egyptian Women Welfare.”

¹⁰²³ Mahmoud, “Aza Al-Garf, Strong Voice.”

unit, they revealed their activist side, but with a more Islamist framework and a less feminist one. Rather than fighting for equality rights between men and women, they are striving for the existence of 'equity'. Such practices fall in line with the MB and FJP's desire for a complementarity of roles, and in keeping with the obligations of a woman to her family and her society.

The New Egypt: Inhospitable for Women Activists and Public Personalities?

The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) published a report entitled "Women and the Arab Spring" in early 2012, which provided an assessment of women's rights in all countries that have experienced a revolution or an uprising since 2011.¹⁰²⁴ In the section on Egypt, a summary was given on women's rights and their positions within governmental entities and parliamentary units during Mubarak's reign and after the revolution. Women's representation in Egypt's government during Mubarak's reign concluded with the presence of only three women out of 37 ministers. The Mubarak years witnessed a 'slight increase' of women in local councils from 1.6 percent in 2002 to 4 percent in 2008. In 2008, Eva Kyrolos became the first woman mayor in Egypt. During Mubarak's rule in 2007, female candidates made up ten candidates out of 609 candidates, where one woman was elected.¹⁰²⁵ Nine women were appointed to the 264-member SC, representing four percent of the entire parliament. In the 2010 elections, 380 women ran for elections and 62 were elected to the reserved seats, in addition to the appointment of one woman by the president. In the end,

¹⁰²⁴ "Women and the Arab Spring: Taking their Place?" 20.

¹⁰²⁵ Ibid.

female representation amassed to twelve percent in Parliament.¹⁰²⁶ The year 2003 saw the first female judge to be appointed to the Supreme Constitutional Court. However, she was not allowed to hold any hearings, stripping her of any real legislative authority.¹⁰²⁷ The ban on appointed female judges was lifted in 2007, when thirty female judges were appointed to the civil courts, but not to any criminal courts or to the Office of the General Prosecutor; as the State Council (administrative court) deemed such an assignment contradictory to religious beliefs.¹⁰²⁸ In regards to constitutional rights, the 1971 constitution that Mubarak adhered to, stated in Article 40 that “all citizens are equal before the law. They have equal public rights and duties without discrimination on grounds of race, ethnic origin, language, religion or creed.” The report points out that this clause did not contain any reference to gender or sex as grounds for discrimination.¹⁰²⁹ Interestingly, Article 11 of the old constitution references the pivotal role of Islamic law - and not *sharia* - in regards to women’s rights. The Article stipulated that the state would “guarantee harmonization between the duties of woman towards the family and her work in the society, ensuring her equal status with man in fields of political, social, cultural and economic life, without violation of the rules of Islamic jurisprudence.”¹⁰³⁰

Comparing Mubarak’s reign (which spanned over thirty years) to the two years post revolution seems an unfair and incomplete critique. Women activists under Mubarak’s rule had several outlets to contest and fight for better conditions

¹⁰²⁶ “Women and the Arab Spring: Taking their Place?” 20.

¹⁰²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰²⁸ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁰²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰³⁰ *Ibid.*

and laws for the female population, through institutions such as NGOs and the NCW. Following the 2011 revolution, the NCW has been under constant attack, and has been fighting off accusations by Islamists of trying to westernize the Egyptian culture and disintegrate the fabric of its Muslim society through secular laws and ideologies.¹⁰³¹ As for the status of NGOs in Egypt, many have closed down or were forced to terminate their activities, pending investigations on the nature of its funding and its activities.¹⁰³² With the formation of a new government, and the reinvention of its structure, as well as the implementation of electoral laws detailing the type and formation of seats and electoral lists; two years is not a long enough span of time to work out the faults and drawbacks of these laws. Nevertheless, the report reviews the issues listed in the previous paragraph in the new Egypt. In regards to women in Egypt's ministries: out of a total of 31 ministries, only two are headed by women.¹⁰³³ In addition, the Minister of Local Development stated in June 2011 that he will refrain from appointing any women as mayors "due to the difficult times in the country," and that he did not want to add to the already existing burdens and responsibilities put on women, which he believed could prove too much for them to handle.¹⁰³⁴ As mentioned before in Chapter Six, the SCAF dissolved the old laws passed regarding the

¹⁰³¹ Dalia Rabie, "Is the Brotherhood Feigning a Feud with the Women's Council?" *Egypt Independent*, March 25, 2013, accessed March 31, 2013, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/brotherhood-feigning-feud-women-s-council>

¹⁰³² "Backgrounder: The Campaign Against NGOs In Egypt," *Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED)*, February 10, 2012, accessed March 24, 2013, <http://pomed.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Egypt-NGO-Backgrounder.pdf> and Vickie Langohr, "Strong NGOs are vital to protect women," *Egypt Independent*, November 26, 2012, accessed March 31, 2013, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/opinion/strong-ngos-are-vital-protect-women>

¹⁰³³ Safaa Abdoun, "Factbox- Women's Rights in Egypt," *Trustlaw.org*, November 9, 2012, accessed November 9, 2012, <http://www.trust.org/trustlaw/news/factbox-womens-rights-in-egypt/>

¹⁰³⁴ "Women and the Arab Spring: Taking their Place?" 21.

reservation of parliamentary seats for women, and replaced them with a decree that required the placement of at least one woman on all electoral lists. However, the majority of female candidates were placed in the lower half of the lists, resulting in a two percent female presence in the PA. As for the post-January 25 Constitution, the worry remains that the constitution will be guided by an Islamist agenda, thereby greatly affecting the future of women's rights in Egypt.

Egyptian women have a great challenge ahead of them. With the passing of the peoples' uprising, many believed that a woman's place in society would improve. Sexual harassment of women has been a growing phenomenon in Egypt over the past ten years. For example, a 2008 survey publicized that 83 percent of Egyptian women had been sexually harassed, and 62 percent of the men surveyed admitted to harassing women, where 53 percent of them blamed the women for bringing it on themselves.¹⁰³⁵ However, the reports of sexual harassment and abuse continued, and in some cases increased exponentially.¹⁰³⁶ Cases of sexual harassment have discouraged many women activists from engaging the public or joining protests. Female journalists and even political candidates refrained from actively engaging the public on the streets whether through campaigning efforts or as part of protests and demonstrations. During the campaign season, while a candidate was addressing the public in the governorate of Qena, she was verbally and physically attacked when a male attendee shouted at her for not wearing a veil and being 'un-

¹⁰³⁵ Shsbi, 6.

¹⁰³⁶ Dalia Moniem, "Fighting Egypt's Sexual Harassment Epidemic, One Step at a Time," *Africa Review*, September 29, 2012, accessed March 23, 2013, <http://www.africareview.com/Special-Reports/Combating-Egypt's-sexual-harassment-epidemic/-/979182/1521030/-/xwjvtl/-/index.html>

Islamic', as he threw his shoe at her.¹⁰³⁷ Similar accusation have been hurled at female protestors and activists where they have been attacked for 'betraying' their traditional roles, insisting that a woman's 'rightful' place was at home. A journalist was subjected to comments like "better for you to go home and feed your babies," and "go get married." Such discouraging opinions and attitudes put women in vulnerable positions where sexual assaults continued during their participation in public political protests.¹⁰³⁸

In an attempt to decrease the incidents of harassment directed at women, the military deployed female officers during the election season to guard polling places. Similarly in 2006, several incidents of sexual assault forced police officials in Cairo to increase the number of patrols to fight the increase of such incidents, but the process of criminalizing sexual harassment was never passed.¹⁰³⁹ Several activists and protestors have suspected that these actions took place as part of opponents' tactic in weakening the spirits of protestors and discouraging them from engaging in public political participation.¹⁰⁴⁰ Furthermore, attacking female protestors is in keeping with an old tactic used by the Mubarak's security apparatus, and which is still being used by the military, post-Mubarak.¹⁰⁴¹

¹⁰³⁷ Nadya Khalife, "Sexual Violence Has No Place in Egypt's Public Forum," *Huffington Post*, December 20, 2011, accessed January 11, 2012, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/nadya-khalife/sexual-violence-egypt-women_b_1158122.html?ref=world

¹⁰³⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰³⁹ "Rights Groups Say Harassment, Assault Affects Female Participation in Protests," *Egypt Independent*, June 8, 2012, accessed September 21, 2012, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/rights-groups-say-harassment-assault-affects-female-participation-protests>

¹⁰⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴¹ "What the Women Say," 5.

The fact still remains that society and the government are still unable and unequipped to deal with that form of 'sexual terrorism' and violence directed at one gender. Furthermore, due to the fact that such issues are considered a taboo, women do not report such incidents of harassment and sexual assaults, making it increasingly difficult to gather accurate information, assess the magnitude of the problem and present possible solutions or agendas to combat such aggression. As previously mentioned, the attack of female protesters in November 2011 prompted a protest held by female activists, to demonstrate against the use of force by the army on women.¹⁰⁴² However, many traditionalist strands of society saw this protest as an insult and a slap on the face of Egyptian men, where the women had to represent themselves and fight for their honour by marching in the streets, prompting the traditionalist public to view this action as testament to the absence of any 'real mean' in the country to reclaim their honour for them.¹⁰⁴³ Faced with the unwavering traditional and patriarchal society, women have to factor in the growing popularity of Islamist movements and the slow Islamization of Egypt's streets.¹⁰⁴⁴ On the other hand, seeing that a large portion of the population lives under the poverty line (where they live on less than two dollars per day), Egyptian women's concerns currently focus on the availability of a source of independent income and rising rate of unmarried

¹⁰⁴² "Continued Militarization: Increased Violence Against Women Human Rights Defenders During Dispersal of Cabinet Sit-in... Women Activists Beaten, Brutalized and Subjected to Sexual Violence," Nazra for Feminist Studies, December 18, 2011, accessed October 1, 2012, <http://nazra.org/en/2011/12/continued-militarization-increased-violence-against-women-human-rights-defenders>

¹⁰⁴³ G. R, Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 17, 2012.

¹⁰⁴⁴ "What the Women Say," 9.

women, in light of the financial crisis post-revolution Egypt faces.¹⁰⁴⁵ According to some reports, almost five million Egyptian women are considered their families' sole breadwinners, and more than 90 percent of young people remain jobless, where almost half of them are women.¹⁰⁴⁶

Irrespective of the tactics and endgame of the Muslim Sisters, they still represent a fascinating social and political group. Many of today's Muslim Sisters are highly vocal and have become prominent public figures, in addition to the MB's female youth that have welcomed the newfound freedom and desire for a more democratic Egypt. Muslim Sister, Nermin Hassan, explains: "The waters are stirring and we have started to think about what we know about women's rights."¹⁰⁴⁷ Hassan was delegated with the task of teaching young Muslim Sisters how to treat their husbands and present themselves in the most suitable light. However, Hassan claims that this has changed after the revolution, where "there is no longer the language that says you should be obedient but more emphasis on complementing each other and that there should be no power struggle between men and women."¹⁰⁴⁸ Still, the Muslim Sisters reject the concepts of feminism on the basis of their understanding that it is mainly a Western one that aims to destroy the family unit, in which the MB's historical organization is rooted as a structure and a way of life. Kamel frames the issue of feminism versus Islamism in the following question:

"Is it equality or equity? That's the issue. What the liberals care about is women's freedom...men and women have the same

¹⁰⁴⁵ M.A., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, March 22, 2012.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Asem and Shsbi, 7.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Khalaf.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Ibid.

rights and responsibilities but I know that there are differences between men and women, it's biological. Being a mother is a woman's most important job, it's fundamental, and so we speak of the protection of motherhood and child and the liberals don't like it."¹⁰⁴⁹

The Muslim Sisters are difficult for sociologists and political analysts to define: Are they Islamic feminists aiming to improve women's status or are they just Islamists working from within the MB for the betterment and advancement of the MB's vision of an Islamic *ūmma*? In addition to their new flurry of activities within the FJP, the Sisters have not neglected their *da'wa* duties as the current first lady of Egypt, Naglaa Ali, continues to engage the public through *da'wa* and social work.¹⁰⁵⁰ Tohidi states that in general, women in the Muslim countries are "fighting and strategizing against two sets of pressures, one stemming from the internal patriarchal system and the other emitted by those forces seen as external, threatening people's national and cultural boundaries."¹⁰⁵¹ Islamic feminism is a fitting idea to deal with both struggles, where women - analogous to the Muslim Sisters - are guided by their religious beliefs in trying to encourage and actualize the egalitarian ethics of Islam in their fight for women's rights. However, Tohidi makes a distinction in regards to women who mobilize within an Islamic framework; there are "those Islamic women who are genuinely promoting women's rights and hence inclusionary in their politics [and] those who insist on fanatic or totalitarian Islam."¹⁰⁵² Public personalities such as Fatema Khafagy, a board member of the alliance for Arab women, claims that the MB uses its

¹⁰⁴⁹ Khalaf.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵¹ Tohidi, 15.

¹⁰⁵² Moghadam (2002), 1147.

female members to enhance its image as a gender equality advocate. She explains: “the whole system is a strict hierarchal structure and the heads are all men. To me they look like an army, with men at the top taking decisions and women having to comply.”¹⁰⁵³ On the other hand, Asem - the young Muslim Sister - views the MB’s methodology of giving orders and its chain of command as a positive attribute, clarifying that “the Muslim Brotherhood’s biggest strength is that they have very dedicated young people ready to implement the democratic decisions even though they might not agree with some of them. That’s why we win elections.”¹⁰⁵⁴ However, such level of obedience worry several factions and many secular-minded women activists look at the Muslim Sisters with a hint of distrust, viewing them as an even bigger threat than their male counterparts. The chairwoman of the Alliance for Arab Women stated: “I can’t claim to understand them 100 percent but I think they have undergone some kind of brainwashing.”¹⁰⁵⁵

There is some doubt that the real motive for the MB in empowering the female members is nothing more than a ploy to address the fears of the secular Egyptian population and the international community. Such strong showing of politically active women may be one of the many reasons that the MB is looked upon as a more moderate Islamist movement; an entity that does not pose much of a threat in comparison to the more hard-lined Islamist currents of the Salafist community in Egypt. The new concern that has been occupying the minds of many Egyptians within Egypt and abroad is that an Islamist government will

¹⁰⁵³ Shsbi, 7.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Khalaf.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Ibid.

breed a more conservative Egyptian society. Political sociology professor Dr. Said Sadek, explains that

“having the Muslim Brotherhood in power will make the people more conservative not because of specific legislation, but because Egyptians are conditioned to follow their leaders and not challenge them or their beliefs. Hence, the fear is not from the ‘Ikhwanization’ of state institutions but from the ‘Ikhwanization’ of society, which is a slow but steadily growing process.”¹⁰⁵⁶

This scenario does not seem farfetched or unlikely. Similar sentiments were witnessed in Iran before the 1979 revolution, when Iranians from across the political spectrum joined Khomeini in his quest to rid Iran of all Western powers and influence. That a Muslim society sweeps away the imperialist influence seemed like the best solution for Iran. However, with Khomeini’s ‘liberation’ of Iran from the West, came the dissolution of women’s rights and freedoms. Once the Ayatollahs took power, the treatment of women took a negative turn as they viewed the modern woman as “a source of ritual pollution; for the radical lay thinkers, the apolitical Westernized woman was a duped agent of imperialist cultural hegemony.”¹⁰⁵⁷ As expected in political negotiations and in the transformation of direction and ideology of political power, the issues pertaining to women’s rights and family law were the first articles to be dismissed. The year 1979 saw more than the revolution in Iran. By June 1979, Khomeini had suspended the Family Protection Law, put a stop to appointing women as judges, declared the act of divorce as only a man’s prerogative, banned women from enlisting in the army, forced women to wear the veil in the workplace, segregated

¹⁰⁵⁶ Abdoun, “Muslim Brotherhood Women Try to Assuage Concerns.”

¹⁰⁵⁷ Janet Afary, *Sexual Politics in Modern Iran*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 237.

sports and educational institutions and schools, declared that married women could no longer attend high school and closed down day care centres to force working mothers to quit their jobs and retreat back into the home.¹⁰⁵⁸

The fate that met Iranian women gives little hope to Egyptian women today, as a MB member has become president.¹⁰⁵⁹ However, Ghandour assessed the position of women in Iran in 2011, more than thirty years after the revolution, and the results are not as negative as one would think. Today, women in Iran are more literate and more educated, and Iran has produced many female literary authors.¹⁰⁶⁰ Much like the Muslim Sisters in the MB organization, Iranian women have yet to occupy senior positions in government or have a seat on the judicial bench. However, Khomeini's government is the reason for the rising rate of literacy and level of healthcare. Ghandour pointed out that in spite of Khomeini's Islamist idea of an Islamic nation, where women were confined to their duties of the household and family, difficult economic and political conditions that have been sprung on Iran in the past few decades have overshadowed the 'tired Islamist idea' in the face of survival and prosperity.¹⁰⁶¹ Optimists such as Asef Bayat described modern Iran as a country that passed through "a phase of experimentation [where] the appeal, energy and sources of legitimacy of Islamism have been exhausted even among its once-ardent supporters."¹⁰⁶² In the midst of trying to rebuild Egypt and appease the different political currents,

¹⁰⁵⁸ Amal Ghandour, "On Women and the Egyptian Uprising," *Midan Masr*, accessed September 20, 2012, <http://www.midanmasr.com/en/article.aspx?articleID=88>

¹⁰⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶² *Ibid.*

Egypt's economic climate has been rapidly deteriorating, and the prospects of receiving funds are being threatened in the midst of political unrest.

It is important to compare today's Egypt with Iran thirty years ago, as many analysts and bloggers have made that comparison soon after the Islamists won a majority in the PA elections. A comparison between Egypt and Iran, although highlighted by the similar circumstances in which the two countries have shared, should not overlook the differences in the culture and history of each. The variables that affect feminism and Islamic feminism, like cultures and norms, play a great role in the direction one country may take that may not necessarily mimic that of the other country. It is too soon to tell whether Egypt will undergo the same experiences and trials, assuming the Islamist current continues to overwhelm the secular and liberal groups amidst the rewriting of the constitution and the PA re-elections. As the probability of the Mubarak regime being replaced with an Islamist one looms, many wonder if Egypt would transform to another Iran. One analyst in particular started to compare women's rights advances in post-Khomeini Iran to that of Egypt's female empowerment since the start of the 20th century.¹⁰⁶³ The comparison revealed many surprises, where when the amendments were assessed in regards to Egypt, the results were disappointing, as there existed a huge gap between the 'in principle' and 'in practice' of such laws.¹⁰⁶⁴ Ghandour explained that Islamic law acknowledges the 'equality' of women and men in citizenship, but the penal code and its articles such as Article 277 for example, stated that the "man is guilty [of adultery] only if he commits the

¹⁰⁶³ Ghandour.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Ibid.

act at his marital home, a woman is guilty regardless of where the act takes place.”¹⁰⁶⁵ The battle between the Muslim Sisters and advocates of feminism, as well as the arguments that erupt between Islamic feminists and secular feminists is an ongoing saga of accusations of narrow-mindedness and Western imperialism. However, the question of whether the Muslim Sisters and Islamic feminists belong to the same camp is yet to be established. Both the Sisters and Islamic feminists advocate a lifestyle of complementarity between the sexes, as opposed to secular feminists’ call for equality and the absence of discrimination based on one’s gender. Furthermore, the idea of equity versus equality is prominent in the rhetoric of Islamic feminists and the Muslim Sisters, where they believe a person should be assigned a position or role in society based on their qualifications and not their gender.

There still exists a real concern that women’s rights will end up taking a back seat in the liberal and secular groups fight against an Islamist-led assembly. As the Arab Spring report on women’s rights points out: “women’s rights are the first to be sacrificed by politicians seeking to hold on to power and to appease the most conservative factions.”¹⁰⁶⁶ Until a final constitution is established, the future of women in Egypt remains hazy at best. Human rights activists and secularists need to keep in mind the example of Algeria and Yemen. When Algeria gained its independence from colonialist rule, and after their female population fought for that freedom, they were deprived of their rights, under a new form of authoritarian

¹⁰⁶⁵ Ghandour.

¹⁰⁶⁶ “Women and the Arab Spring: Taking their Place?” 6.

rule.¹⁰⁶⁷ Similarly, in Yemen during the 1960s, women fought several injustices alongside men, but when the opportunity for change came along, the new regime increased discrimination against women.¹⁰⁶⁸ In the face of the Muslim Sisters' optimism and high hopes for women's equality and presence in Egypt's political field, the rest of Egypt's women are wary and anxious. Egyptian women have found themselves side-lined from the political process that is attempting to direct the new policies of Egypt, due to the nature of that process which has begun to take the form of an Islamist agenda. As for the actions and aspirations of the Muslim Sisters, only time will tell whether their goals will become more Islamic-centred or more gender-associated. Moreover, the MB as an Islamist movement needs to be continually reassessed amidst Egypt's overall political scene, which is repeatedly changing and where the power dynamics are always shifting. Preconceived ideologies of political Islam cannot be a deciding factor in considering the MB and Muslim Sisters' political future in Egypt.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Magdy.

¹⁰⁶⁸“Women and the Arab Spring: Taking their Place?” 6.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

In regards to women's rights and their place in Egyptian society, the MB ensured that the Sisters were publicly represented in the FJP and Parliament. But do the Sisters represent all Egyptian women's issues and concerns? More importantly, is the Egyptian society more accepting of female representation in Parliament without an over-protective parent - in the form of the MB and the FJP? The purpose of this dissertation is to ascertain two fundamental issues: 1- are the Muslim Sisters seeking to ensure a better quality of life and the realization of equal rights for women, or at the very least; laws that ensure women's rights will be protected? 2- Do their roles within the MB organization and party empower them as equal contributors to the Islamist movement? And is the importance of achieving women's rights within an Islamic framework overshadowed by the Muslim Sisters' focus and drive to fulfill al-Banna's legacy - and that of the MB as a whole - of witnessing the birth of an Islamic *ūmma* within Egyptian borders, with *sharia* as its principal and only source of law? Both issues are controlled and largely influenced by the MB's stance of female empowerment within the MB and within society.

Cooke describes the term Islamic feminism as a "linking of apparently mutually exclusive identities" to create a radical act of subversion.¹⁰⁶⁹ This raises the question of the role of the Muslim Sisters. Can they be labeled as Islamic feminists in their attempt to subvert the process of Islamizing society from within the largest Islamist movement? Are the Muslim Sisters trying to engage the

¹⁰⁶⁹ Cooke (2000), 55-59.

greater Egyptian society by creating a new self-positioning to include several identities and belongings? Or are their goals focused on Islamizing Egyptian state and society irrespective of the possibility of alienating existing multiple identities and affiliations in the process? Feminism has always been part of other discourses. In the case of Egypt, those discourses centred on religion and nationalism. By gendering these discourses, Egyptian feminists partook in the practice of positioning themselves within such a broad spectrum of gendered movements. Another major struggle that feminists currently face is the hegemony of cultural and traditional values and practices over the realization that certain rights and laws need to exist in a nation's constitution and legal system. These laws are meant to protect women against discrimination and elevate their dismal status in their respective traditional societies. Seeing that these nation-states and the culture that accompany them were built on a long history of patriarchal practices, alongside its nature of patrilineal inheritance laws and family makeup, these traditional societies rely heavily on placing men in leading roles over their female counterparts; thereby making it more difficult for women to occupy senior public roles that superimpose or are even equal to that of men. The positioning of feminists within a religious movement is not new in the field of women studies. The Western world has witnessed feminist interpretations of sacred scripture within the Judean religion and Christianity. Such activism resulted in the accommodation of women in new religious roles as ministers and rabbis and 'unordained' women as leaders of congregational prayer.¹⁰⁷⁰ However, much like the Muslim Sisters, these religious feminists do not seem to influence their

¹⁰⁷⁰ Badran (2009), 220.

secular society or government, as they seem more compartmentalized within their nation.¹⁰⁷¹

In regards to the first issue: *Are the Muslim Sisters seeking to ensure a better quality of life and the realization of equal rights for women, or at the very least; laws that ensure women's rights will be protected?*

Badran explained the rise of politically active Muslim Sisters as a reaction against the secularization of society, similar to the rise of secular feminism in the presence of religious conservatism.¹⁰⁷² This is in keeping with the rise of Islamist trends in Egypt starting in the 1970s to the present day. In essence, both secular and Islamic feminisms contain elements of each other, religious feminism may be incumbent on an Islamist paradigm, but both are able to work together and find a common ground in this broad discourse of feminism. The Muslim Sisters and their ideology and vision would be welcomed and shared amongst other feminists if it resembled that of a Muslim feminist, which according to Tohidi is welcomed within the spectrum of feminist discourse.¹⁰⁷³ This is conditional upon their contribution to the empowerment of women in their region or state, and when their rhetoric does not include religious structures, and is based on practices of religious and cultural tolerance. However, when they “cooperate with and serve as arms of repressive and anti-democratic Islamist states,”¹⁰⁷⁴ they de-value the

¹⁰⁷¹ Badran (2009), 220.

¹⁰⁷² Ibid., 217.

¹⁰⁷³ Tohidi, 14.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Ibid.

experiences shared by other sisterhoods within a framework that welcomes divergent feminist discourses.

The Representation of the Muslim Sisters - Childs and Krook mapped the substantive representation of women, where several bullet points help in further understanding the Muslim Sisters' role within Egypt's government and society, and their effect on both.¹⁰⁷⁵ Of the most relevant points, the "Anticipated Effects of Increased Proportions of Women" assist in predicting the outputs of the Sisters' increased public role, where either 1- women will form strategic coalitions with other women; 2- women will influence men's behavior in a feminist or women-friendly policy direction; or 3- women will provoke a backlash among male legislators.¹⁰⁷⁶ Unfortunately, as preceding chapters discuss, none of the above relationship dynamics were established, except that there was a backlash by the secular non-Islamic legislators - both female and male, during the course of the Sisters' public role as MPs. The second test of the Muslim Sisters' representation in Parliament would be their ability to contain and enable characteristics of legislative contexts through 1- Institutional norms, especially in legislative practices; 2- Positional power, especially in legislative committees; 3- Political parties, especially in terms of party ideology; and 4- Political climate, especially in terms of its relation to women's empowerment.¹⁰⁷⁷ During their short role in Parliament, the Sisters were not in support of several secular laws that aimed to protect women's rights, but they have been highly vocal and effective within their political party. However, their influence in the party did not carry over

¹⁰⁷⁵ Childs and Krook, 128.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Ibid.

to parliamentary actions or legislative issues. Moreover, their role in the CA did not serve more than a picture of tokenism, where they were not as vocal as they could have been due to time constraints, and external factors of trying to approve the constitution in as little time as possible. Their role during that time period was complementary to that of the studies of tokenism where the 'tokens' comply with the expectations set forth by the dominant majority; which in this case was the FJP and other Islamist parties that dominated the CA membership.¹⁰⁷⁸ The Sisters' other option would be to become marginalized if they did not accept their positioning within the CA, which did not help their efforts of empowering all Sisters within and outside the MB. Childs and Krook point out that critical mass theory literature explains that as "women grow more numerous in legislative chambers, they will increasingly be able to form strategic coalitions with one another to promote legislation related to women's issues."¹⁰⁷⁹ However, that is not a likely scenario with the Sisters who seem to be at war with secular influences in legislation in regards to women's rights. On the other hand, Childs and Krook point out scenarios where increased participation of women may eventually result in influencing men's behavior to dedicate more time and effort to women's issues. Naturally, this may result in a negative and opposite reaction, where male legislators may retaliate and create obstacles and diversions that obstruct women's policy initiatives and push them further from the inner positions of power. In respect to a patriarchal society, a lower number of female representation may be better than a higher presence, as the limited number of

¹⁰⁷⁸ Childs and Krook, 135.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Ibid.

women may work more efficiently and focus on women-centric policies, without threatening or undermining male domination in the legislative process.

The MB is the oldest Islamic movement that is built on a conservative ideology and practice, it has yet to seat a woman in its highest offices. The MB, nonetheless, viewed the assignment of women in more senior positions in its political wing - the FJP - as equally empowering and encouraging to the advancement of women's rights in an Arab society; via an Islamic reference. However, the Muslim Sisters who have taken on more public roles that require more of their time and effort still have to report to male members of the FJP and MB. The FJP female members who occupy senior positions only assume seniority over other women, within the different branches of the FJP's women committee across Egypt. Additionally, the FJP Muslim Sisters were preoccupied with initiatives and projects under the MB's Nahda plan that was complementary to their gender, i.e. issues of social services, children's education curriculum, and household concerns. The majority of the two percent female representation in the recently elected PA belongs to the FJP.¹⁰⁸⁰ In the meantime, the affairs of the Muslim Sisters within the organization seem unchanging. A male MB member assigned as the head of a Muslim Sisters Division explained that if the Division were to be placed within the hierarchy and a woman were to be assigned as the head of the Muslim Sisters Division, the Sisters will always need to rely on the male MB members to oversee and execute certain functions and activities.¹⁰⁸¹ In regards to the FJP, when a senior official was asked whether a woman would

¹⁰⁸⁰ Refer to Appendix E.

¹⁰⁸¹ A.M.A., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 31, 2012.

ever be allowed to occupy a senior position such as the presidency, he answered that the FJP would give women full support to do so, but doubted that any woman would succeed in garnering enough support among the people, due to the traditional nature of Egyptian society.¹⁰⁸² However, in other ultra-conservative societies, such as Yemen, the MB branch witnessed internal elections allowing a woman instead of a man to head the women's division.

The second issue focuses on the following questions: 2- Do the roles of the Sisters within the MB organization and party empower them as equal contributors to the Islamist movement? And is the importance of achieving women's rights within an Islamic framework overshadowed by the MB's mission and vision for the state?

It is pertinent to acknowledge the Muslim Sisters' political work in Egypt's streets through engaging the public and possible MB voters. The Sisters may have been absent from the public view during the electoral seasons; but they have been at the core of the MB's campaigning activities. In the course of Mubarak's presidential run, more than 44,000 Muslim Brotherhood students were victimized on university grounds and were regularly arrested. 3,200 Brotherhood leaders were banned from traveling, 11,000 Brothers were forced to resign from their jobs, and most MB members were prevented from performing the compulsory military service.¹⁰⁸³ These arrests took place during the MB's attempts to reach out to Egypt's civil society. Furthermore, the MB members

¹⁰⁸² A.S., Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 24, 2012.

¹⁰⁸³ "32,000 Muslim Brothers Detained Under Old Regime Emergency Law," *IkhwanWeb*, June 2, 2012, accessed June 11, 2012, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=30044&ref=search.php>

faced excessive police force and strategic arrests of those who criticized Mubarak (which also included non-Islamist personalities), under the allegations of posing a security threat. The Muslim Sisters have made themselves known to the public and within the MB's patriarchal organization, through their skills in securing votes and winning over the public with their campaigning skills. Their efforts focused on engaging all civil society outlets, which has been a common practice by several Islamist movements within the Middle East. The inclusion of civil society is neither a support of democratic reform or as part of the MB's accommodationist tactic. According to Brower's, it is a tactic to "restore solidarity among the Islamic community and to assert that group's authority as the source and basis of legitimate rule."¹⁰⁸⁴ Such methodology and agenda in engaging the Egyptian society for specific nation-building purposes that center on an Islamist framework, further attests to the MB's unwavering goal of Islamizing Egypt. They rationalized that "appropriation of civil society discourse in articulating this program has in turn forced a reinterpretation of Islamic ideas about political and social life."¹⁰⁸⁵ Brower's research reveals that this annexation of civil society outlets have been used by leaders of two major socio-political Islamist movements in both Sudan and Tunisia over the past decade. For example, Browers explains Ghannouchi's concept of civil society as one that "relies upon Western liberal political institutions supported by an Islamic community and infused throughout with an Islamic ethos."¹⁰⁸⁶ Similarly, the MB has been utilizing certain institutions to further their message and social movement. However, the

¹⁰⁸⁴ . Browers, 137.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Ibid.

major concern comes into play when one of these Islamist movements are in a position of power, a position that Egypt's MB now enjoys with a majority power in Parliament and a senior MB member in the position of Egypt's president. Islamist movements have turned against women's rights in the past, much like authoritarian regimes, once they are in a position of power.

The problem with Islamizing state policy or state rule is that it focuses largely on issues pertaining to morality, family issues, the public arena and cultural and educational influences; as is the case in present day Egypt and Tunisia. The role of the Muslim Sisters has been significant in regards to preserving and enhancing the religious element in Egypt's everyday life, where *sharia* is only concerned with protecting the family nucleus from foreign laws and intervention for the betterment of the Islamic society as a whole. In effect, the Muslim Sisters affect state policy in regards to the issues in which Islamist parties are mostly invested. However, it is unclear whether the Muslim Sisters support these laws or rules due to their conviction, or whether they decide to conform to their movement and party at the expense of their struggle for empowerment. For example, Moghadam poses this question in regards to women and gender activists in Iran:

“Can the activities of reformist men and women-who situate themselves within the broad objectives of the Islamic Republic of Iran and seek the improvement of the status of women-be described as constituting an Islamic feminism? Or are they reinforcing and legitimizing the state's gender policy?”¹⁰⁸⁷

If an Islamist-leaning government continues to thrive in Egypt, will the Muslim Sisters - as members of the ruling party - be considered at the forefront of an

¹⁰⁸⁷Moghadam (2002), 1142.

Islamic feminist construct? Or will they, first and foremost, legitimize the ruling party's policies irrespective of their implications on gender policies and whether they apply new and improved interpretations of *sharia*? If the Sisters were to act in keeping with Islamic feminism and its mission statement of re-examining interpretations of *sharia*, they must execute these endeavors independent from their movement and not under its Islamist rule, so as to not confuse their intention with their political affiliation. Islamist governments have been failing on both the economic front and in areas concerning efficient government administration. Unfortunately, the Islamist ethos hinges upon marginal state issues such as modesty, sex segregation and Islamizing state education through the re-writing of school curriculum and enforcing religious instruction in schools. This has been the case with Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party.

Where do the Muslim Sisters Stand in Respect to Islamic Feminism?

Al-Ghazali was seen as the champion for Islamic feminism, due to her long history in feminist organizations that centered on an Islamic ideology. Al-Ghazali's MLA and her inclusion in the Muslim Sisters at a later stage in her life is testament to that. However, her affiliation to the formidable MB organization blurred her loyalties and commitments to many. It is not clear if she was an Islamic feminist or just an Islamist like the MB members. According to the information presented in preceding chapters, al-Ghazali is the only Muslim Sister who claimed allegiance to both camps during different episodes of her life. As for the Muslim Sisters of today, their loyalties seem to lie wholly with the MB. In

contrast to other Islamist feminists, the Muslim Sisters did not try to engage the MB or Islamic clerics in an attempt to reinterpret dated Islamic *fiqh*, to ascertain whether the laws and influences that were in effect centuries ago, may have been tainted with a patriarchal stance of society and religion. Islamic feminists such as Ezzat and Kazim encourage women to educate themselves in matters of Islamic jurisprudence and *Quranic* texts to offer a less patriarchal interpretation of certain hadiths; which many Islamic movements such as the MB and Salafist groups use, in adopting harmful practices that affect women's freedoms and rights. Instead, after the approval of el-Garf and Kamel was cited in several media regarding the practice of FGM 'to a certain degree', they later denied it and tried to direct the public's attention to more pressing issues that plague Egypt's women like healthcare, security and access to education. Further, el-Garf stated that "these issues (of FGM) do not bother anyone, we have bigger issues."

¹⁰⁸⁸ This further highlights what this research work had initially set out to explain, that any feminist - Islamist or not - struggles against two major challenges. Whereas Western feminists had to fight back against the archaic notion of male superiority and patriarchy, women of the Middle East need to battle traditions that encourage such patriarchal behaviour; and against the fear of losing the Muslim identity in the face of Western encroachment and globalization. Many - such as Qasim Amin – believe that the advancement of the Middle Eastern society starts with the liberalisation of the Arab woman.

Islamic feminists consider female political participation to be inseparable from the process of innovation and contemporary Islamic thought in the Islamic

¹⁰⁸⁸ "Egyptian Sisters of the Muslim Brotherhood Rise with Conservative Vision."

context. Political participation is a prominent issue as it could represent the point of release of Islamic nations from their state of deterioration. A more visible role for women encourages developmental efforts and steps towards governmental and political reform; forcing society to re-evaluate the dated laws and Islamic jurisprudence that restrict women's mobility and activism that is crucial in spinning the wheels of change.¹⁰⁸⁹ The main issue with Islamic feminism is that women, not religion, should be the focus and center of its theory and practice. As Islamic feminists lose sight of their goal to empower women and attack social and gender inequalities in favor of imposing new interpretations of Islamic scripture and practice, Islamic feminism becomes more of a fundamentalist option than an ideology based on the belief in women's rights and equality. The belief that only Islam would realize women's rights and nothing else becomes problematic. This seems to be the ideology of the Muslim Sisters as they combat UN conventions and Unicef's international laws that protect women's and children's rights within a non-Islamic framework. The Muslim Sisters stand by and support the archaic practices of FGM and support the MB's decision in regards to their goal to ensure women's rights as long as it does not contradict with Islam and the traditions and culture found in Egypt. For example, a young Muslim Sister stands by her conviction and that of the MB, that Islam will provide women with the rights that Islam bestowed upon her and protect her from incidents of violence and repression through the utilization of the MB's civil-

¹⁰⁸⁹ Jaafar Abdul Rahman, Review of al-Mar'a wal 'amal 'al-Siyasi: al Ru'ya al-Islamiyya [Women and Political Action: Islamic Vision] by Heba Raouf Ezzat, *Dirasat Mujtama'iyah [Societal Studies]*, accessed January 10, 2013, http://societal.societystudies.org/ssc/2/Women_Political.htm

society outreach activities.¹⁰⁹⁰ Also, she argues: “Islam empowers women in both their households and in society. Men and women are both entitled to the same level of respect, social status, and protection under the law.”¹⁰⁹¹

Abdel-Latif’s research article on the Muslim Sisters has been the only piece of research available which documents the Muslim Sisters desire to speak out and escape the MB’s male rule and fight for a better representation within the MB. Abdel-Latif had interviewed several Sisters who wanted to be included in the MB’s Guidance Bureau and *Shura* Council, and to be given more public roles that required more responsibilities. Moreover, el-Halafawy asserted that there are Sisters who have demanded a representation of the MB women in the Guidance Bureau, but el-Halafawy has long since left the organization stating vague reasons. However, in today’s post-revolution Egypt, these sentiments are not visible.¹⁰⁹² The Muslim Sisters have been outspoken and vocal in their demand for an improved Egypt free from corruption and tyranny, as they occupied more active positions within the FJP, the PA and the SC.¹⁰⁹³ However, none of these vocal women have articulated their desire to contest for seats within the senior offices of the MB. Despite many claims that the MB will revamp its structure to include the Muslim Sisters Division within its organizational structure,¹⁰⁹⁴ this has yet to materialize. Furthermore, there has been no mention of replacing the head of the Muslim Sisters Division with a woman instead of a man. Resistance to this

¹⁰⁹⁰ Asem.

¹⁰⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹² Khalaf.

¹⁰⁹³ Refer to Appendix E and F for the exact number of Muslim Sisters in the PA and SC.

¹⁰⁹⁴ For a clearer picture of the division of the Muslim Sisters Division from that of the MB’s organizational structure, refer to Appendix A and D.

idea might be due to the fact that if a woman replaces a man as head of the Muslim Sisters Division, she will automatically be awarded a seat on the Guidance Council. This is an idea that has yet to be accepted by the more conservative older generation, who represent the majority of the MB's Bureau. In effect, the Muslim Sisters have continued their long legacy of accommodating and assisting the MB's activities and projects, well into the post-revolution days.

As Islamists and secularists fight over the direction and content of the new constitution, the main contention surrounds the clause that stipulates that men and women are equal, so as long as this equality does not contradict Islamic law. Such a vague article of the law could lead to many breaches of women's rights, as it could allow right-wing conservatives to restrict women's rights by imposing an archaic literal interpretation of *sharia* law. Several prominent Muslim Sisters, such as Kamel, who is a member of the president's advisory team, have defended the wording of that clause. Kamel explained her reasoning - and that of the MB and FJP - behind supporting this clause, as she explained that *sharia* law gives men certain rights that are not applicable to women. Laws such as polygamy and inheritance laws give men a greater share due to their natural responsibility as heads of households.¹⁰⁹⁵

¹⁰⁹⁵ "Egyptian Sisters of the Muslim Brotherhood Rise with Conservative Vision."

Closing Statements

Middle Eastern countries irrespective of the majority religion have different opinions regarding women's rights and the question of gender equality.¹⁰⁹⁶ A majority of these nations' populations may view the idea of equal rights as favorable, but in Egypt they are a slim majority: only 58 percent favor equal rights, and 36 percent oppose it. Only 53 percent of Egyptian men support equal rights.¹⁰⁹⁷ According to the survey conducted in the first half of 2012 on a sample size equal to two percent of Egypt's population; many Egyptians support the general idea of gender quality but are less enthused in regards to "gender parity in politics, economics, and family life," where they believe men make better politicians and leaders.¹⁰⁹⁸

The Muslim Sisters' stance is a vague one at best. Analysts such as Abdel-Latif and Ottaway formulated that the Sisters are aiming for demanding roles within the MB and are fighting for senior positions in the organization; thereby reflecting their Islamic feminist roots and demands for more equality within an Islamic framework. However, the Sisters in a post-revolution era have been supporting the MB on many opinions and laws that are detriment to Egyptian women's well-being, under the pretense that these existent laws are in

¹⁰⁹⁶ This point includes a much wider discussion and comparison of secular and modern laws and nation-states with pre-modern (before the formation of nation-states and establishment of citizenship rights) Islamic jurisprudence and *sharia*, and how both camps interpret concepts of freedom, citizenship and equality. See Ebrahim Moosa, "The Dilemma of Islamic Rights Schemes," *Worlds & Knowledges Otherwise* (2004):1-25, accessed March 23, 2013, https://globalstudies.trinity.duke.edu/wp-content/themes/cgsh/materials/WKO/v1d1_MoosaE.pdf

¹⁰⁹⁷ "Most Muslims Want Democracy, Personal Freedoms, and Islam in Political Life: Few Believe U.S. Backs Democracy," *Pew Research Center*, (July 10, 2012): 2, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2012/07/10/most-muslims-want-democracy-personal-freedoms-and-islam-in-political-life/>

¹⁰⁹⁸ Ibid.

contradiction with *sharia* and an Islamic way of life: the endgame of the MB for Egypt. Almost all of the Sisters that were interviewed over the course of this dissertation described their loyalty and admiration for the MB's dream of an Islamic *ūmma*, which many believe will happen once Egypt regains its power and presence in the Muslim region. Moreover, the control of Egypt by the MB seems very much a reality for many of the Sisters who have boasted that admirers and supporters greatly outnumber that of the members of this Islamist organization.¹⁰⁹⁹ It is interesting to mention that Browers described the Sisters' support and loyalty to the MB as a tactic of repression by the MB, where the organization has forced its women to rethink the whole idea of civil society in Egypt; by diverting all their attention and energy towards the importance and sanctity of the family unit and the role of women in upholding them.¹¹⁰⁰ In essence, Browers reveals that this reformulation of thinking and living is a sort of prelude to the "exclusion of women from the realm of civil society - and from a central role in the *ūmma* - on the part of the Islamists as well."¹¹⁰¹ As for the FJP, Kamel has insisted that the Sisters are well on their way to become more politically active within the FJP, explaining that the MB is now pre-occupied with placing "the cornerstones for the right path toward democracy within its political party, including bringing more women into the leadership... [which will take] a few years,"¹¹⁰² due to the lack of experienced female cadres within the MB's political front who could occupy serious positions in the FJP.

¹⁰⁹⁹ G.R. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 17, 2012.

¹¹⁰⁰ Browers, 156.

¹¹⁰¹ Ibid.

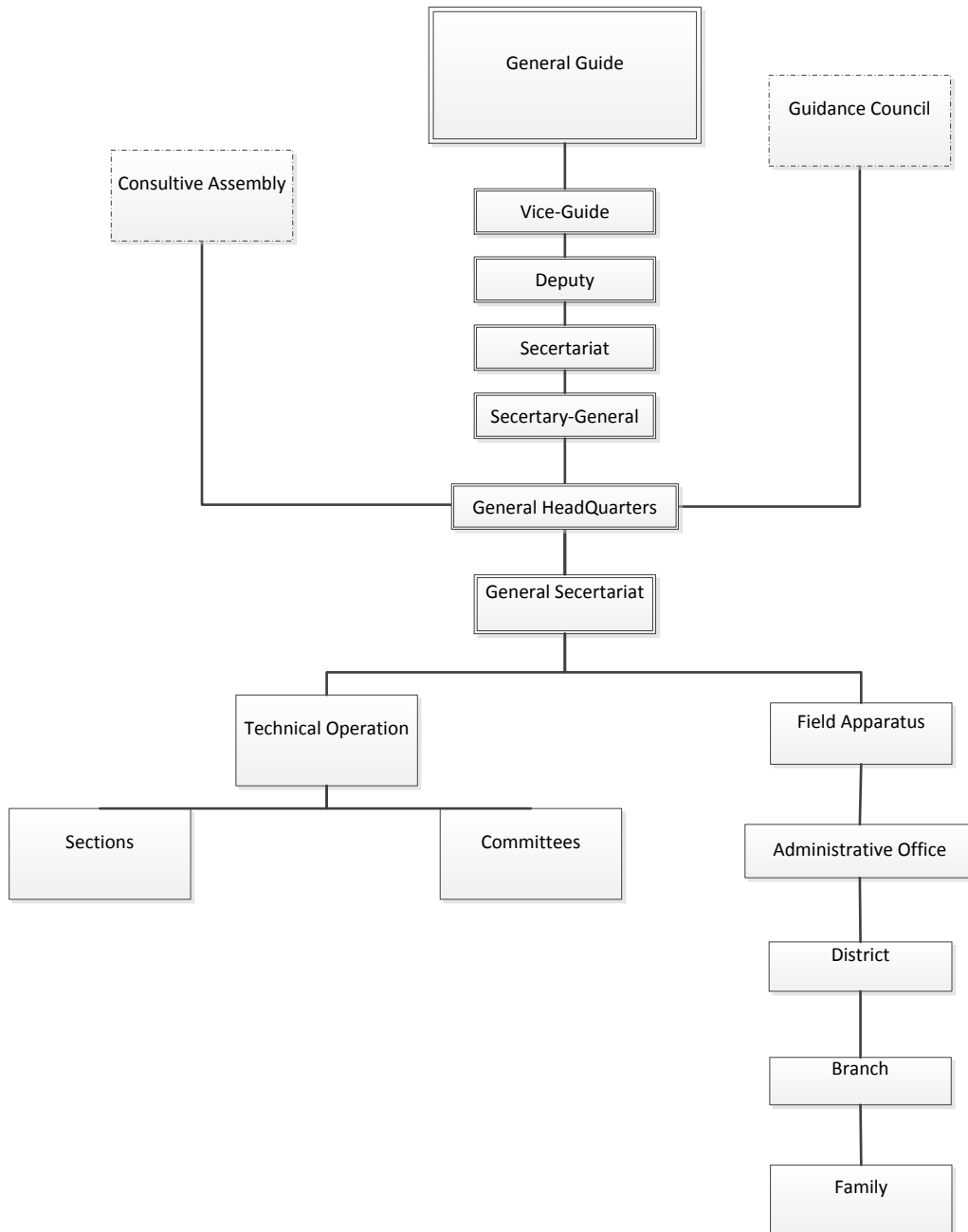
¹¹⁰² "Egyptian Sisters of the Muslim Brotherhood Rise with Conservative Vision."

The Muslim Sisters today have proven themselves quite adept in engaging the public and politically participating in governmental entities such as the parliament and ministries. This thesis has shed light on their many qualities and their ability to mass mobilize and gain people's trust and vote at times of national elections, for the advancement of the MB, and not necessarily for the advancement of women's rights, or for the provision of a better quality of life for Egyptian women and children. However, if it were not for their long affiliation and inclusion within the formidable MB - an organization that dictates the educational curricula taught within MB homes - these Muslim Sisters could have taken on a more Islamic feminist stance, in challenging dated and masculine-infused interpretations of the *Quran*, *sharia* and *hadiths*. If the Sisters were to take on such a task, they could work to ensure that Islam would be fairly utilized in safeguarding women's rights to be fully realized within the socially and culturally acceptable framework of Islamic jurisprudence. As Childs points out, the influence of 'token' members of Parliament or society such as the Muslim Sisters is not controlled by their numerical standing, the Sisters can still affect the power dynamics within Parliament and within the MB, by utilizing their specialized abilities in influencing decision-making in regards to women and children's issues on a sub-state and state level. If the Muslim Sisters were to succeed in that and fully adopt the methodologies of Islamic feminism, maybe then they can find a common ground with the remainder of Egypt's feminists and activists by creating a space where Islam and its re-interpretation becomes compatible with the emancipation of Egyptian women. Feminism and gender activism need to be

rooted in the mores and norms of the locale in which it exists. For example, the Muslim woman is viewed negatively by Western activists as the latter do not fully comprehend what a woman's trials and tribulations are within an Islamic or Middle Eastern paradigm. The Muslim Sisters are placed in a unique position; they can bridge the gap between secular and Islamic; West and East, if they choose to work outside the confines of a strict hierarchical Islamist organization. However, the possibility that the Muslim Sisters may experience a backlash from their organization and be labeled as traitors of the Islamic cause and their brethren is quite palpable, and may halt any tactics that may have been discussed over the course of Abdel-Latif's and Ottaway's research effort. In conclusion, the chances of empowering women - whether Muslim Sisters or otherwise - is slim under a religious fundamentalist rule. Both secular and Islamist strands of feminism need to participate in a show of solidarity to be able to negotiate a new path to women's empowerment within Egyptian state and society.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: The Muslim Brotherhood's Hierarchical Structure¹¹⁰³



¹¹⁰³ Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society Of Muslim Brothers* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 164.

Appendix B: Sample of Questions Asked During Interviews

Questions posed to Muslim Sisters and Muslim Brothers

Closed-questions:

- How long have you been part of the MB?
- How did you enter the organization? What or who was an influence?
- What were the reasons behind you joining the MB?
- When did you join the FJP? What is your role in the FJP?
- What is your occupation? Academic qualifications? Position in MB and/or FJP?
- The Muslim Sisters have been in the forefront of the FJP's campaigns and initiatives, why in your opinion has that tactic been important for the party and the organization?
- How does the MB and FJP support its female members in engaging the political sphere via the organization or the party?
- What role did the FJP female candidates support and/or occupy in the party? And how does it differ from the FJP's male members?
- Why is there an absence of female representation in the MB's Guidance Bureau and *Shura* Council? Does that mean that the senior positions within the party will only be reserved for its male members as well?
- Why did the MB women engage the political activity of running for elections starting from the year 2000 and not before that? Why the 2000 elections? Was the MB trying to send a message or revolutionize its public image in Egypt and abroad?
- Women usually join the MB via a male relative/spouse's membership, has that changed now that there is no overbearing regime to worry about persecuting the Muslim Sisters? What are the requirements a woman must fulfil to join the organization now?
- Will any of the Muslim Sisters ever be allowed to occupy a senior position within the PA, such as head of the Agriculture committee or Industry committee?

Open-ended questions:

- Describe your activities in the MB before the revolution.
- Describe your experience during the 18 days of the revolution.
- How do you feel the MB has changed after the revolution without an oppressive regime present?
- How was your experience in the 2011/2012 elections? Can you provide a comparison to your experiences in elections that took place before the revolution?

- Explain and describe the steps you took to prepare for your campaign, such as electoral activities of garnering votes, engaging your constituencies on the street, attending workshops and training sessions
- Do you think the role of women in the MB will change whether minimally or drastically in this new era that Egypt is witnessing?
- Discuss the obstacles and opportunities presented within the MB's generational shifts and tensions?
- How do you assess and describe the impact and work of Zaynab al-Ghazali? Why has there not been a Muslim Sister as politically active as she was?

Questions posed to analysts/ academics/ politicians:

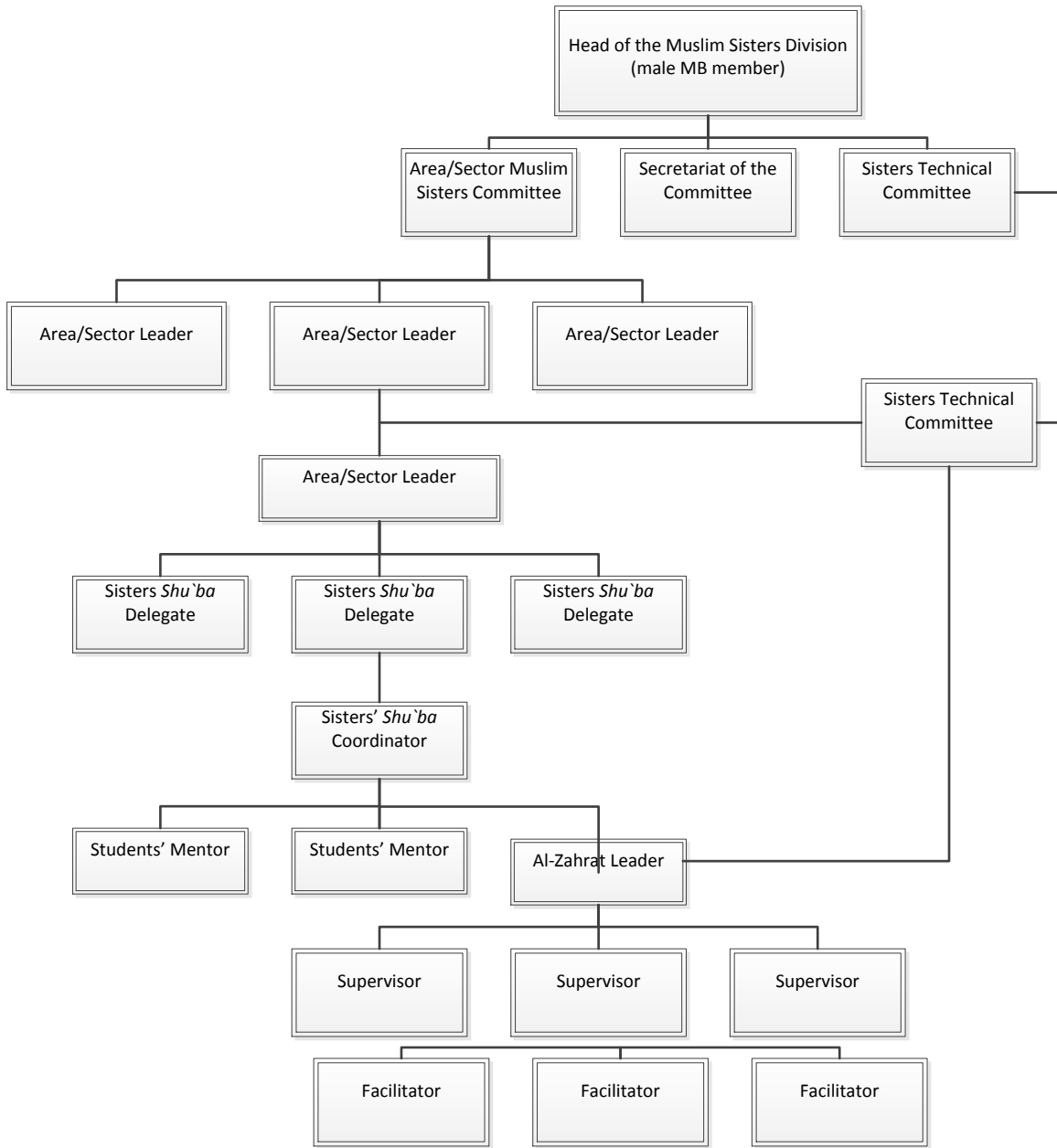
- What reasons would you attribute to the electoral contestation of Muslim Sisters during the 2000-2010 elections?
- Why did the MB not depend on the Muslim Sisters to run in elections preceding the 2000 elections?
- In post-revolution Egypt, do you think the Muslim Sisters will be given more important roles within the MB and FJP?
- Would you differentiate the role of the Muslim Sisters in the MB from the FJP? i.e. will the Sisters gain more privileges and responsibilities in one entity more than another?
- In your opinion, does the MB and/or the Sisters rate issues of human rights and women's rights high on their priorities agenda? Will they take the necessary measures that protect those rights or will they buckle down from the pressure coming emanating from the Salafist front or other influential political groups?
- How will the present dominant rule of the MB affect women's rights in Egypt?
- Do you believe the Muslim Sisters will be allowed to take a seat in the MB's senior echelons of its Guidance Bureau and *Shura* Council? Or will they remain hidden still in the post-revolution era?
- What do you think were the main reasons for the MB's win in the PA and SC elections? Comment on the two percent of female MPs in PA and the fact that 70 percent of the female representation in the PA are FJP members?

Appendix C: The Number of Female Parliamentarians from 1976 – 2005 ¹¹⁰⁴

Election Year	No. of Women Elected	No. of Women Appointed	Total Parliamentarian	Percentage of Female - occupied Seats in Parliament
1976	4	2	6	1.6%
1979	33	2	35	9 %
1984	37	1	38	8.25 %
1987	14	4	18	3.9%
1990	7	3	10	2.2%
1995	5	4	9	1.6%
2000	7	4	11	2.5%
2005	4	5	9	2%

¹¹⁰⁴ EI-Adly, 46.

Appendix D: The Muslim Sisters' Organizational Chart ¹¹⁰⁵



¹¹⁰⁵ Dahlia Abdel-Raheem, "Khitat al taharok bayn al tajamou'at al nisa'iyya," [The Mobilization Plan amongst the Female Congregations] *6th of October Weekly Magazine*, October 25, 2009, 28.

Appendix E: The 2011 People's Assembly Elections Results¹¹⁰⁶

Name of Party/Bloc	Number of Seats	Percentage of Seats	Number of Women in each Party/Bloc
Democratic Alliance	225	45.2	
Freedom and Justice Party	216	43.4	4
al-Karama	6	1.2	-
al-Hadara	2	0.4	-
Labor Party	1	0.2	-
Islamist Alliance	125	25	-
al-Nour	109	21.8	-
Building and Development Party	13	2.6	-
al-Asala	3	0.6	-
al-Wafd	41	8.2	3
Egyptian Bloc	34	6.8	-
Al-Tagammu Party	3	0.6	-
Egyptian Social Democratic Party	16	3.2	1
Free Egyptians Party	15	3	-
Reform and Development Party	10	2	1
al-Wasat Party	9	1.8	-
Revolution Continues Alliance	8	1.6	-
Egypt National Party	5	1	-
Egyptian Citizen Party	4	0.8	-
Union Party	3	0.6	-
Freedom Party	3	0.6	-
al-Adl Party	2	0.4	-
Democratic Peace Party	2	0.4	-
Arab Egyptian Union Party	1	0.2	-
Nasserite Party	1	0.2	-
Independents	25	5	-
TOTAL	498	100	9

* Ten additional seats were appointed by SCAF, which included three women.

¹¹⁰⁶ "Results of Egypt's People's Assembly Elections: Guide to Egypt's Transition," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, accessed February 1, 2012, <http://egyptelections.carnegieendowment.org/2012/01/25/results-of-egypt%E2%80%99s-people%E2%80%99s-assembly-elections>

Appendix F: The 2012 Shura Council Elections Results¹¹⁰⁷

Name of Party/Bloc	Number of Seats	Percentage of Seats
Freedom and Justice Party	105	58.3
al-Nour Party	45	25
al-Wafd Party	14	7.7
Egyptian Bloc	8	4.4
Freedom Party	2	1.1
Democratic Peace Party	2	1.1
Independents	4	2.2
TOTAL	180	100

* There are no official statistics regarding women’s representation in the 180 elected seats. The President appoints the remaining seats.

¹¹⁰⁷ “Results of Shura Council Elections,” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, accessed February 1, 2012, <http://egyptelections.carnegieendowment.org/2012/02/29/results-of-shura-council-elections>

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O.K. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 18, 2012.

R.H. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, February 9, 2012.

S.S. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, February 1, 2012.

S.U. Interview by Mona Farag. MP3 recording. Cairo, Egypt, January 30, 2012.